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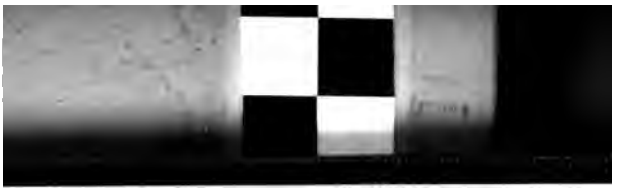

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THE WORKS OF TOBIAS SMOLLETT

IN TWELVE VOLUMES

LIMITED EDITION

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THE WORKS OF TOBIAS SMOLLETT

VOLUME THREE

THE ADVENTURES OF RODERICK RANDOM

COMPLETE IN THREE PARTS

PART III.

WITH THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE, AND AN INTRODUCTION BY

G. H. MAYNADIER, PH.D.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK

GEORGE D. SPROUL

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IN the morning before I got up, Strap came into my chamber, and, finding me awake, hemmed several times, scratched his head, cast his eyes upon the ground, and, with a very foolish kind of simper upon his face, gave me to understand he had something to communicate. "By your countenance," said I, "I expect to hear good tidings." "Indifferent," replied he, tittering; "that is, here after as it shall be. You must know I have some thoughts of altering my condition." "What!" cried

I, astonished, "a matrimonial scheme? O rare Strap! thou hast got the heels of me at last." "N'— no less, I assure you," said he, bursting into a laugh of self-approbation; "a tallow-chandler's widow, that lives hard by, has taken a liking to me — a fine jolly dame, as plump as a partridge. She has a well-furnished house, a brisk trade, and a good deal of the ready. I may have her for the asking. She told a friend of mine, a brother footman, that she would take me out of a stinking clout. But I refused to give my final answer, till I knew your opinion of the matter." I congratulated Monsieur d'Estrapes upon his conquest, and approved of the scheme, provided he could be assured of those circumstances of her fortune; but advised him to do nothing rashly, and give me an opportunity of seeing the lady before matters should be brought to a conclusion. He assured me he would do nothing without my consent and approbation, and that very morning, while I was at breakfast, introduced his inamorata to my acquaintance. She was a short thick woman, about the age of thirty-six, and had a particular prominence of belly, which I perceived at first sight, not without some suspicion of foul play. I desired her, however, to sit, and treated her with a dish of tea; the discourse turned upon the good qualities of Strap, whom I represented as a prodigy of sobriety, industry, and virtue. — When she took her leave, he followed her to the door, and returned licking his lips, and asked if I did not think she was a luscious creature. I made no mystery of my apprehension, but declared my sentiments of her without reserve; at

which he was not surprised, telling me he had observed the same symptom, but had been informed by his friend that she was only liver-grown, and would in a few months be as small in the waist as ever. "Yes," said I, "a few weeks I believe will do the business. In short, Strap, it is my opinion, that you are egregiously imposed upon; and that this friend is no other than a rascal who wants to palm his trull upon you for a wife, that he may at once deliver himself from the importunities of the mother, and the expense of her bantling; for which reason I would not have you trust implicitly to the report he makes of her wealth, which is inconsistent with his behaviour; nor run your head precipitately into a noose, that you may afterwards wish exchanged for the hangman's." He seemed very much startled at my insinuation, and promised to look twice before he leaped; saying, with some heat, "Odds, if I find his intention is to betray me, we shall see which of us is the better man." My prediction was verified in less than a fortnight; her great belly producing an infant, to the unspeakable amazement of Strap, who was, before this happened, inclinable to believe I had refined a little too much in my penetration. His false friend disappeared; and in a few days after an execution was issued against her goods and household furniture, which were seized by the creditors.

Meanwhile I met my friend Banter at the ordinary, and in the evening went to the opera with him and Mr. Chatter, who pointed out Melinda in one of the boxes, and offered to introduce me to her, observing at the same time, that she was a reigning toast worth

ten thousand pounds. This piece of information made my heart bound with joy, and I discovered great eagerness to accept the proposal; upon which he assured me I should dance with her at the next assembly, if he had any influence in that quarter. So saying, he went round, spoke to her some minutes, and, as I imagined, pointed at me; then returning, told me, to my inexpressible pleasure, that I might depend upon what he had promised, for she was now engaged as my partner. Banter, in a whisper, gave me to understand, that she was an incorrigible coquette, who would grant the same favour to any young fellow in England of a tolerable appearance, merely to engage him among the herd of her admirers, that she might have the pleasure of seeing them daily increase; that she was of a cold, insensible disposition, dead to every passion but vanity, and so blind to merit, that he would lay any wager the wealthiest fool should carry her at last. I attributed a good deal of this intelligence to the satirical turn of my friend, or resentment for having himself suffered a rebuff from the lady in question; and, at any rate, trusted so much to my own accomplishments, as to believe no woman could resist the ardour of my addresses.

Full of this confidence I repaired to Hampstead, in company with Billy Chatter, my Lord Hobble, and Doctor Wagtail. There I saw a very brilliant assembly, before whom I had the honour to walk a minuet with Melinda, who charmed me with her frank manner and easiness of behaviour. Before the country dances began, I received a message, by a person I

did not know, from Bragwell, who was present, importing that nobody who knew him presumed to dance with Melinda, while he was there in person; and that I would do well to relinquish her without noise, because he had a mind to lead up a country dance with her. This extraordinary intimation, which was delivered in the lady's hearing, did not at all discompose me, who by this time was pretty well acquainted with the character of my rival. I therefore, without the least symptom of concern, bade the gentleman tell Mr. Bragwell, that, since I was so happy as to obtain the lady's consent, I should not be solicitous about his; and desired the bearer himself to bring me no such impertinent messages for the future. Melinda affected a sort of confusion, and pretended to wonder that Mr. Bragwell should give himself such liberties with regard to her, who had no manner of connexion with the fellow. I laid hold of this opportunity to display my valour, and offered to call him to account for his insolence, a proposal which she absolutely refused, under pretence of consulting my safety; though I could perceive by the sparkling of her eyes, that she would not have thought herself affronted in being the subject of a duel. I was by no means pleased with this discovery of her thoughts, which not only argued the most unjustifiable vanity, but likewise the most barbarous indifference; however, I was allured by her fortune, and resolved to gratify her pride, in making her the occasion of a public quarrel between me and Bragwell, who, I was pretty certain, would never drive matters to a dangerous extremity.

While we danced together, I observed this formidable rival at one end of the room, encircled with a cluster of beaux, to whom he talked with great vehemence, casting many big looks at me, from time to time: I guessed the subject of his discourse, and as soon as I had handed my partner to her seat, strutted up to the place where he stood, and cocking my hat in his face, demanded aloud if he had anything to say to me. He answered with a sullen tone, "Nothing at present, sir;" and turned about upon his heel. "Well," said I, "you know where I am to be found at any time." His companions stared at one another, and I returned to the lady, whose features brightened at my approach, and immediately a whisper ran through the whole room; after which so many eyes were turned upon me, that I was ready to sink with confusion. When the ball broke up, I led her to her coach, and, like a true French gallant, would have got up behind it, in order to protect her from violence on the road; but she absolutely refused my offer, and expressed her concern that there was not an empty seat for me within the vehicle.

Next day in the afternoon, I waited on her at her lodgings, by permission, in company with Chatter, and was very civilly received by her mother, with whom she lived; there were a good many fashionable people present, chiefly young fellows, and immediately after tea, a couple of card tables were set, at one of which I had the honour to play with Melinda, who, in less than three hours, made shift to plunder me of eight guineas. I was well enough content to lose a little money with a good grace, that I might

have an opportunity in the meantime to say soft things, which are still most welcome when attended with good luck; but I was by no means satisfied of her fair play, a circumstance that shocked me not a little, and greatly impaired my opinion of her disinterestedness and delicacy. However, I was resolved to profit by this behaviour, and treat her in my turn with less ceremony; accordingly, I laid close siege to her, and finding her not at all disgusted with the gross incense I offered, that very night made a declaration of love in plain terms. She received my addresses with great gaiety, and pretended to laugh them off; but, at the same time, treated me with such particular complacency, that I was persuaded I had made a conquest of her heart, and concluded myself the happiest man alive. Elevated with these flattering ideas, I sat down again to cards after supper, and with great cheerfulness suffered myself to be cheated of ten guineas more.

It was late before I took my leave, after being favoured with a general invitation; and when I got into bed, the adventures of the day hindered me from sleeping. Sometimes I pleased myself with the hopes of possessing a fine woman with ten thousand pounds; then I would ruminate on the character I had heard of her from Banter, and compare it with the circumstances of her conduct towards me, which seemed to bear too great a resemblance to the picture he had drawn. This introduced a melancholy reflection on the expense I had undergone, and the smallness of my funds to support it, which, by the

bye, were none of my own. In short, I found myself involved in doubts and perplexities, that kept me awake the greatest part of the night.

In the morning, Strap, with whom I had not conversed for two days, presented himself with the utensils for shaving me; upon which, I asked his opinion of the lady whom he had seen me conduct to her coach at Hampstead. "Odd! she's a delicious creature," cried he, "and, as I am informed, a great fortune. I am sorry you did not insist on going home with her. I dare say she would not have refused your company; for she seems to be a good-humoured soul." "There's a time for all things," said I. "You must know, Strap, I was in company with her till one o'clock this morning." I had no sooner pronounced these words than he began to caper about the room, and snap his fingers, crying, in a transport, "The day's our own!—the day's our own!" I gave him to understand that his triumph was a little premature, and that I had more difficulties to surmount than he was aware of. Then I recounted to him the intelligence I had received from Banter, at which he changed colour, shook his head, and observed there was no faith in woman. I told him I was resolved to make a bold push notwithstanding, although I foresaw it would lead me into a great expense; and bade him guess the sum I had lost last night at cards. He scratched his chin, and protested his abhorrence of cards, the very name of which being mentioned, made him sweat with vexation, as it recalled the money-dropper to his remembrance: "But, however," said

he, "you have to do with other-guess people now. Why, I suppose, if you had a bad run last night, you would scarce come off for less than ten or twelve shillings." I was mortified at this piece of simplicity, which I imagined, at that time, was all affected, by way of reprimand for my folly; and asked with some heat, if he thought I spent the evening in a cellar with chairmen and bunters; giving him to know at the same time, that my expense had amounted to eighteen guineas. It would require the pencil of Hogarth to express the astonishment and concern of Strap, on hearing this piece of news. The bason in which he was preparing the lather for my chin, dropped out of his hands, and he remained some time immovable in that ludicrous attitude, with his mouth open, and his eyes thrust forward considerably beyond their station; but remembering my disposition, which was touchy and impatient of control, he smothered his chagrin, and attempted to recollect himself. With this view, he endeavoured to laugh, but, in spite of his teeth, broke out into a whimper, took up his wash-ball and pewter pot, scrubbed my beard with the one, and discharged the other upon my face. I took no notice of his confusion, but after he had fully recovered himself, put him in mind of his right, and assured him of my readiness to surrender his effects whenever he should think proper to demand them. He was nettled at my insinuation, which he thought proceeded from my distrust of his friendship; and begged I would never talk to him in that strain again, unless I had a mind to break his heart.

This good creature's unalterable friendship for me, affected me with the most grateful sentiments, and acted as a spur to my resolution of acquiring a fortune, that I might have it in my power to manifest my generosity in my turn. For this purpose I determined to bring matters to a speedy conclusion with Melinda; well knowing that a few such nights as the last would effectually incapacitate me from prosecuting that or any other advantageous amour.

While my meditation was busied in planning out my future conduct, Mr. Banter favoured me with a visit; and, after breakfast, asked how I had passed the preceding evening. I answered, I was very agreeably entertained at a private house. "Yes," said he, with a sarcastic smile, "you deserved something extraordinary for the price you paid." I was surprised at this remark, and pretended ignorance of his meaning. "Come, come, Random," continued he, "you need not make a mystery of it to me, the whole town has it. I wish that foolish affair between you and Bragwell at Hampstead had been less public. It has set all the busy-bodies at work to find out your real character and situation; and you cannot imagine what conjectures have already circulated at your expense. One suspects you to be a Jesuit in disguise; another thinks you are an agent from the Pretender; a third believes you to be an upstart gamester, because nobody knows anything of your family or fortune; a fourth is of opinion that you are an Irish fortune-hunter." This last hypothesis touched me so nearly, that, to conceal my confusion, I was fain to interrupt his detail, and d—n the world for

an envious meddling community, that would not suffer a gentleman to live without molestation. He took no notice of this apostrophe, but went on, "For my own part, I neither know, nor desire to know, who or what you are; this I am certain of, that few people make a mystery of their origin or situation, who can boast of anything advantageous in either; and my own opinion of the matter is, that you have raised yourself by your industry from nothing to the appearance you now maintain, and which you endeavour to support by some matrimonial scheme." Here he fixed his eyes stedfastly upon me, and perceiving my face covered with blushes, told me, now he was confirmed in his opinion; — "Look ye, Random," said he, "I have divined your plan, and am confident it will never succeed. You are too honest, and too ignorant of the town, to practise the necessary cheats of your profession, and detect the conspiracies that will be formed against you. Besides, you are downright bashful — what the devil! set up for a fortune-hunter before you have conquered the sense of shame! Perhaps you are entitled by your merit, and I believe you are, to a richer and better wife than Melinda; but, take my word for it, she is not to be won at that rate; or, if you are so lucky as to carry her, between you and me, you may say as Teague did, *By my soul, I have gained a loss!* She would take care to spend her fortune in a twinkling, and soon make you sick of her extravagance." I was alarmed by his discourse, while I resented the freedom of it, and expressed my disgust by telling him he was mistaken in my intentions, and desiring he

would give me leave to regulate my conduct according to the dictates of my own reason. He made an apology for the liberty he had taken, and ascribed it to the warmth of his friendship for me; as an uncommon instance of which, he borrowed five guineas, assuring me, there were very few people in the world whom he would so far favour with his confidence. I gave him the money, and professed myself so well convinced of his sincerity, that he had no occasion to put it to such extraordinary proofs for the future. "I thought," said he, "to have asked five pieces more, but hearing you was bubbled of eighteen last night, I presumed you might be out of cash, and resolved to model my demand accordingly." I could not help admiring the cavalier behaviour of this spark, of whom I desired to know his reason for saying I was bubbled. He then gave me to understand, that, before he came to my lodgings, he had beat up Tom Tossle, who, having been present, informed him of the particulars, rehearsed all the fine things I said to Melinda, with which he proposes to entertain the town; and, among other circumstances, assured him, my mistress cheated with so little art, that nobody but a mere novice could have been imposed upon.

The thoughts of becoming a subject of raillery for coxcombs, and losing my money to boot, stung me to the quick; but I made a virtue of my indignation, and swore that no man should, with impunity, either asperse the character of Melinda, or turn my behaviour into ridicule. He replied, in a dry manner, that I would find it an Herculean task to chastise

everybody who would laugh at my expense; and as for the character of Melinda, he did not see how it could suffer by what was laid to her charge; for that cheating at cards, far from being reckoned a blemish among people of fashion, was looked upon as an honourable indication of superior genius and address. "But let us waive this subject," said he, "and go to the coffee-house, in order to make a party for dinner."

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

WE REPAIR TO THE COFFEE-HOUSE, WHERE WE OVERHEAR A CURIOUS DISPUTE BETWEEN WAGTAIL AND MEDLAR, WHICH IS REFERRED TO OUR DECISION — THE DOCTOR GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF HIS EXPERIMENT — MEDLAR IS ROASTED BY BANTER AT THE ORDINARY — THE OLD GENTLEMAN'S ADVICE TO ME.

BEING as willing to drop the theme, as he to propose it, I accompanied him thither, where we found Mr. Medlar and Doctor Wagtail disputing upon the word *Custard*, which the physician affirmed should be spelled with a *G*, because it was derived from the Latin verb *gustare*, "to taste." But Medlar pleaded custom in behalf of *C*, observing, that, by the doctor's rule, we ought to change pudding into budding, because it is derived from the French word *Boudin;* and in that case why not retain the original orthography and pronunciation of all the foreign words we have adopted? by which means our language would become a dissonant jargon, without standard or propriety. The controversy was referred to us; and Banter, notwithstanding his real opinion to the contrary, decided it in favour of Wagtail: upon which the peevish annuitant arose, and uttering the mono-

syllable "Pish!" with great emphasis, removed to another table.

We then inquired of the doctor what progress he had made in the experiment of distilling tinder-water; and he told us he had been at all the glass-houses about town, but could find nobody who would undertake to blow a retort large enough to hold the third part of the quantity prescribed; but he intended to try the process on as much as would produce five drops, which would be sufficient to prove the specific, and then he would make it a parliament-ary affair; that he had already purchased a consider-able weight of rags, in reducing which to tinder, he had met with a misfortune, which had obliged him to change his lodgings; for he had gathered them in a heap on the floor, and set fire to them with a candle, on the supposition that the boards would sustain no damage, because it is the nature of flame to ascend; but, by some very extraordinary accident, the wood was invaded, and began to blaze with great violence, which disordered him so much, that he had not presence of mind enough to call for assistance, and the whole house must have been consumed, with him in the midst of it, had not the smoke that rolled out of the windows in clouds, alarmed the neighbour-hood, and brought people to his succour. That he had lost a pair of black-velvet breeches and a tie-wig in the hurry, besides the expense of the rags, which were rendered useless by the water used to quench the flame, and the damage of the floor, which he was compelled to repair. That his landlord, believing him distracted, had insisted on his quitting his apart-

ment at a minute's warning, and he was put to incredible inconvenience; but now he was settled in a very comfortable house, and had the use of a large paved yard for preparing his tinder: so that he hoped in a very short time to reap the fruits of his labour.

After having congratulated the doctor on his prospect, and read the papers, we repaired to an auction of pictures, where we entertained ourselves an hour or two. From thence we adjourned to the Mall, and after two or three turns, went back to dinner, Banter assuring us, that he intended to roast Medlar at the ordinary; and, indeed, we were no sooner set than this cynic began to execute his purpose, by telling the old gentleman, that he looked extremely well, considering the little sleep he had enjoyed last night. To this compliment Medlar made no reply but by a stare, accompanied with a significant grin;—and Banter went on thus: "I don't know whether most to admire, the charity of your mind, or the vigour of your body. Upon my soul, Mr. Medlar, you do generous things with the best taste of any man I know: you extend your compassion to real objects, and exact only such returns as they are capable of making. You must know, gentlemen," said he, turning to the company, "I had been up most part of the night with a friend who is ill of a fever, and on my return home this morning chanced to pass by a gin-shop still open, whence issued a confused sound of mirth and jollity: upon which I popped in my head, and perceived Mr. Medlar dancing bare-headed in the midst of ten or

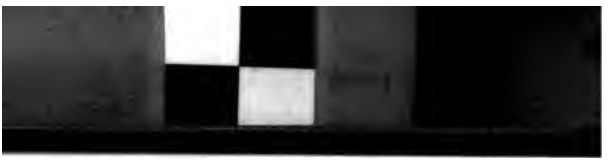
twenty ragged bunters, who rejoiced at his expense. But indeed, Mr. Medlar, you ought not to sacrifice your constitution to your benevolence. Consider you grow old apace; and therefore have a reverend care of your health, which must certainly be very much impaired by these nocturnal expeditions." The testy senior could no longer contain himself, but cried hastily, "'T is well known that your tongue is no slander." "I think," said the other, "you might spare that observation, as you are very sensible, that my tongue has done you signal service on many occasions. You may remember that when you made your addresses to the fat widow, who kept a public-house at Islington, there was a report spread very much to the prejudice of your manhood, which coming to the ears of your mistress, you was discarded immediately, and I brought matters to a reconciliation, by assuring her you had three bastards at nurse in the country: how you ruined your own affair afterwards, it is neither my business nor inclination to relate." This anecdote, which had no other foundation than in Banter's own invention, afforded a good deal of mirth to everybody present, and provoked Mr. Medlar beyond all sufferance; so that he started up in a mighty passion, and, forgetting that his mouth was full, bespattered those who sat next to him, while he discharged his indignation in a volley of oaths, and called Banter insignificant puppy, impertinent jackanapes, and an hundred such appellations; telling the company, he had invented these false malicious aspersions, because he would not lend him money to squander away among rooks and

whores. "A very likely story," said Banter, "that I should attempt to borrow money of a man who is obliged to practise a thousand shifts to make his weekly allowance hold out till Saturday night. Sometimes he sleeps four-and-twenty hours at a stretch, by which means he saves three meals, besides coffee-house expense. Sometimes he is fain to put up with bread and cheese and small beer for dinner; and sometimes he regales on twopenny-worth of ox-cheek in a cellar." "You are a lying miscreant," cried Medlar, in an ecstasy of rage; "I can always command money enough to pay your tailor's bill, which I am sure is no trifle; and I have a good mind to give you a convincing proof of my circumstances, by prosecuting you for defamation, sirrah." By this time the violence of his wrath had deprived him of his appetite, and he sat silent, unable to swallow one mouthful, while his tormentor enjoyed his mortification and increased his chagrin by advising him to lay in plentifully for his next day's fast.

Dinner being ended, we came downstairs to the coffee-room, and Banter went away to keep an appointment, saying, he supposed he should see Wagtail and me in the evening at the Bedford coffee-house. He was no sooner gone, than the old gentleman took me aside, and said, he was sorry to see me so intimate with that fellow, who was one of the most graceless rakes about town, and had already wasted a good estate and constitution upon harlots; that he had been the ruin of many a young man, by introducing them into debauched company, and setting a lewd

example of all manner of wickedness; and that, unless I was on my guard, he would strip me in a short time both of my money and reputation. I thanked him for his information, and promised to conduct myself accordingly, wishing, however, his caution had been a few hours more early, by which means I might have saved five guineas. Notwithstanding this intelligence, I was inclinable to impute some part of the charge to Medlar's revenge for the liberties taken with him at dinner; and, therefore, as soon as I could disengage myself, applied to Wagtail for his opinion of the character in question; resolved to compare their accounts, allowing for the prejudice of each, and to form my judgment upon both, without adhering strictly to either. The doctor assured me, that he was a very pretty gentleman of family and fortune; a scholar, a wit, a critic, and perfectly well acquainted with the town; that his honour and courage were unquestionable, though some extravagances he had been guilty of, and his talents for satire, had procured him enemies, and made some people shy of his acquaintance. From these different sketches, I concluded that Banter was a young fellow of some parts, who had spent his fortune, but retained his appetites, and fallen out with the world, because he could not enjoy it to his wish.

I went to the Bedford coffee-house in the evening, where I met my friends, from thence proceeded to the play, and afterwards carried them home to my lodgings, where we supped in great good-humour.



CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

I RECEIVE A CHALLENGE — THE CONSEQUENCES OF IT — THE QUARREL BEING MADE UP, AM PUT IN ARREST, BY THE CARE AND AFFECTION OF STRAP — BUT IMMEDIATELY RELEASED UPON EXPLAINING MY AFFAIR — THE BEHAVIOUR OF MR. OREGAN AND HIS TWO FRIENDS — I VISIT MELINDA, WHOM I DIVERT WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE DUEL — PROPOSE MARRIAGE — SHE REFERS THE MATTER TO HER MOTHER, OF WHOM I MAKE A SOLEMN DEMAND OF HER DAUGHTER — THE OLD LADY'S BEHAVIOUR — I AM DISCARDED, AND RESENT THEIR DISDAIN.

WHEN I was ready to go abroad next day, Strap brought me a letter, *To Mr. Random, Esq. Those* — Which, upon opening, I found contained a challenge, conceived in these very extraordinary terms:

"SIR, — Whereas I am informed that you make love to Miss Melinda Goosetrap — This is to let you know that she is under promise of marriage to me; and that I am at this present waiting at the back of Montague House, with a pair of good pistols in my hand; and if you will keep your appointment, I will make your tongue confess (after the breath is out of your body) that you do not deserve her so well as

"Your's, etc.

"ROURK OREGAN,"

A MILESIAN RIVAL

I guessed from the style and subscription of this billet, that my rival was a true Milesian, and was not a little uneasy at the contents, especially that part in which he asserted his right to my mistress by promise, a circumstance I did not know how to reconcile to her good sense and penetration. However, this was no time for me to decline the defiance, because the success of my addresses might in a great measure depend upon my behaviour in that affair. I therefore immediately loaded my pistols, and betook myself in a hackney coach to the place appointed, where I found a tall raw-boned man, with a hard-featured countenance, and black bushy beard, walking by himself, wrapped up in a shabby great coat, over which his own hair descended in a leathern queue, from his head, that was covered with a greasy hat trimmed with a tarnished *point d'Espagne*. He no sooner perceived me advancing, than he pulled a pistol from his bosom, and presenting it at me, snapped it without the least preamble. Alarmed at this rude salutation, I made a stand; and before he could adjust his other piece, fired one of mine at him, without doing any damage. By this time he was ready with his second, that flashed in the pan without going off. Upon which he called, with a true Tipperary cadence, "Fire away, honey,"—and began to hammer his flint with great deliberation. But I was resolved to make use of the advantage fortune had given me; and therefore stepped up, without throwing away my fire, desiring him to ask his life, or prepare for another world; but this stout Hibernian refused to condescend, and complained bitterly of my having quitted

my ground before he could return my shot; saying I ought to go back to my station, and let him have an equal chance with me. I endeavoured to persuade him that I had given him a double chance already; and it was my business to prevent him from enjoying a third; — but now, since I had an opportunity, I demanded a parley, and desired to know his condition, and reason for calling me to the field, who, to the best of my remembrance, far from having done him an injury, had never before seen him. He told me, that he was a gentleman of fortune, who had spent all he had, and hearing that Melinda had got ten thousand pounds, he intended to make himself master of that sum by espousing her, and was determined, in an honourable way, to cut the throats of all those who stood between him and his hopes. I then demanded to know the foundation of his hopes; and, now that I had seen him, being more and more astonished at the circumstance of the promise, desired that he would explain that mystery. He gave me to understand, that he trusted entirely to his birth and personal merit; that he had frequently written to Melinda, setting forth his claim and pretensions, but she was never kind enough to send an answer, or even to admit him into her presence; and that the promise he mentioned in his letter was made by his friend Mr. Gahagan, who assured him, that no woman could resist a man of his appearance. I could not forbear laughing to excess at the simplicity of my rival, who did not seem to relish my mirth, but began to be very serious. Upon which I endeavoured to appease him, by giving him my word and honour,

that, far from prejudicing his addresses to the lady, I would represent him to her in the most favourable light I could with any regard to truth; but he must not be surprised if she should remain blind to his deserts, for nothing was more capricious than a woman's mind, and the affection of that sex was seldom purchased with virtue alone. That my declaration might have the better effect, I took notice of his dishabille, and, professing sorrow at seeing a gentleman reduced, slipped two guineas into his hand; at sight of which he threw away his pistols, and, hugging me in his arms, cried, "Arrah, by Jesus now, you are the best friend I have met with these seven long years." When I had suffered some minutes in his embrace, he quitted me, and, picking up his rusty arms, wished the devil might burn him if he should give me any further trouble about womankind.

The quarrel being thus amicably composed, I begged leave to look at his pistols, which I found so crazy and so foul, that I believe it was happy for him neither of them was discharged, for one of them would certainly have split in the going off, and he would, in all probability, have lost his hand in the explosion; but what gave me a lively idea of the man's character was to find, upon examination, that one of them had been loaded without being primed, and the other primed without a charge.

While we walked home together, I expressed a desire of knowing my friend's history; and he informed me of his having served in the German army as a volunteer against the Turks; that, for his be-

haviour at the siege of Belgrade, he had been honoured with an ensign's commission, and afterwards promoted to the rank of lieutenant, in which station it was his misfortune to affront his captain, who challenged him to the field, and was killed in the duel, upon which he was obliged to retreat; — that he had been in England some years soliciting his friends for provision in the British army; but being hitherto unsuccessful, was desired by Mr. Gahagan to turn his thoughts to matrimony, and make his fortune by an advantageous match; in consequence of which advice, he had made up to Melinda, and having heard, by means of an Irish footman in the family, that I was her chief favourite, had called me out, in hopes of removing by my death the greatest obstruction to his desires; but now he was convinced of my honour and generosity, he swore by the blessed Virgin, he would think of her no more, if there was not another woman in the world. As a further proof of his veracity, which I did not at all doubt, he opened an old iron snuff-box, and pulled out his commission in the Imperial army, and his captain's challenge, which he preserved as testimonials of his character. I was so well convinced of this poor man's honesty and courage, that I determined to speak in his behalf to some of my acquaintance, who might recommend his case to the consideration of those who could provide for him; and in the meantime to accommodate him with a few clothes, by which his appearance would be much mended, and himself enabled to renew his solicitations in person.

As we walked along, conversing socially together,

we were met by a file of musketeers, and Strap at their head, who no sooner approached, than, with a frantic look, he cried, "Seize them! — in the name of God! seize them." — We were accordingly surrounded, and put in arrest by the corporal, who was commanding officer; but Captain Oregan disengaged himself, and ran with such speed towards Tottenham Court Road, that he was out of sight in a moment. When my arms were delivered up, and myself secured, Strap became a little more composed, and asked pardon for the liberty he had taken, which he hoped I would excuse, as it proceeded from his affection. He then told me, that, suspecting the letter (which, by the bye, was brought by the author himself) contained something extraordinary, he had peeped through the key-hole, and seen me load my pistols; upon which he ran down to Whitehall, and applied to the officer on guard for a party to put me in arrest; but, before he returned, I was gone in a coach; that he had inquired which way I went, and having heard that duels were commonly fought at the back of Montague House, he conducted the guard to this place, where he thanked God for having found me safe and sound. I gave him to understand, that I forgave his officious concern for once, but cautioned him, in pretty severe terms, of making me the subject of idle conversation for the future; then, turning to the corporal, thanked him for his care, and gave him a crown to drink with his men, assuring him that the rencontre was over long before he came up, and everything compromised, as he might observe by our behaviour; as a farther proof of which he would find, upon examination, that one of my

pistols had been discharged; — but this civil person, without giving himself or me any further trouble, received the bounty with a thousand bows and acknowledgments, and, returning the pistols, released me immediately.

He was not gone a hundred yards, when my friend Oregan came up, in order to rescue me, with two tatter demalions whom he had engaged for that purpose about the purlieus of St. Giles's: one of them was armed with a musket that wanted a lock, and another with a rusty broadsword; but their dress surpassed all description. When he understood I was already free, he made an apology for his abrupt departure, and introduced me to his two companions: first, to Counsellor Fitz-Clabber, who, he told me, was then employed in compiling a history of the kings of Munster, from Irish manuscripts; and then to his friend Mr. Gahagan, who was a profound philosopher and politician, and had projected many excellent schemes for the good of his country. But it seems these literati had been very ill rewarded for their ingenious labours; for between them both there was but one shirt and a half pair of breeches. I thanked them very kindly for their readiness to assist me, and, having offered my service in my turn, bade them good-morrow, desiring Oregan to accompany me to my lodgings, where he was fitted with decent clothes from my wardrobe, so much to his satisfaction, that he swore eternal gratitude and friendship for me, and, at my request, recounted all the adventures of his life.

In the afternoon I waited on Melinda, who received me with great kindness and familiarity, and laughed

excessively at my adventure with the Irishman, to whose wishes she was no stranger, having more than a dozen letters in her possession, which he had wrote to her on the subject of love, and which, for my entertainment, she submitted to my perusal. Having made ourselves merry at the expense of this poor admirer, I seized the opportunity of her mother's going out of the room, and introduced my own passion, which I recommended to her with all the ardour and eloquence I was master of. I flattered, sighed, and swore, entreated, and acted a thousand extravagances, in hopes of making some impression on her heart; but she heard everything I said without discovering the least emotion; and other company came in, before she would vouchsafe one serious reply. After tea, the cards were brought in, according to custom, and it was my good fortune to have Melinda for my partner; by which means, instead of losing, I came off with five guineas clear gain.

I soon became acquainted with a good many people of fashion, and spent my time in the modish diversions of the town, such as plays, operas, masquerades, drums, assemblies, and puppet-shows; chiefly in company with Melinda, whom I cultivated with all the eagerness and address that my prospect could inspire, and my education afford; I spared neither my person nor my purse, to gratify her vanity and pride; my rivals were intimidated, and indeed outshone; and, after all, I began to fear that the dear creature had not a heart to lose. At last, finding myself unable to support the expense of this amour much longer, I was determined to bring the matter to a crisis; and one evening,

while we were together by ourselves, complained of her indifference, described the tortures of suspense to a lovesick mind, and pressed her to disclose her sentiments of matrimony and me, with such earnestness, that she could not, with all her art, shift the subject, but was obliged to come to an éclaircissement. She told me with a careless air, that she had no objection to my person, and, if I could satisfy her mother in other particulars, I should not find her averse to the match; but she was resolved to do nothing in such a momentous concern, without the advice and consent of her parent. This was no very agreeable declaration to me, whose aim had been to win her inclination first, and then secure my conquest by a private marriage, to which I flattered myself she would express no reluctance. That I might not, however, desert my cause before it was desperate, I waited on her mother, and with great formality demanded the daughter in marriage. The good lady, who was a very notable woman, behaved with great state and civility; thanked me for the honour I intended her family; and said, that she did not doubt that I was in all respects qualified to make a woman happy; but it concerned her, as a parent anxious about the welfare of her child, to inquire into the particulars of my fortune, and know what settlement I proposed to make. To this intimation, which would have utterly disconcerted me if I had not expected it, I replied, without hesitation, that, though my fortune was very small, I was a gentleman by birth and education, would maintain her daughter in the sphere of a gentlewoman, and settle her own

dowry on her and her heirs for ever. This careful matron did not seem to relish my proposal, but observed, with a demure countenance, that there was no necessity for settling that upon her child which was her own already: however, if I pleased, her lawyer should confer with mine upon the matter; and, in the meantime, she desired I would favour her with the perusal of my rent-roll. Notwithstanding the vexation I was under, I could scarce forbear laughing in her face, at the mention of my rent-roll, which was, indeed, a severe piece of satire on my pretensions. I frankly owned I had no landed estate; and told her, that I could not exactly specify the sum I was master of, until I had regulated my affairs, which were at present in some disorder; but that I would take an opportunity of satisfying her upon that head very soon.

It was not long before I took my leave, and returned to my lodgings in a very melancholy mood, persuaded that I had nothing more to expect from that quarter. I was confirmed in this opinion next day, when I went back with a view of explaining myself more fully to the old gentlewoman; and was told by the footman, that his ladies were not at home, although I had seen Melinda through the blinds at the parlour window, as I went up to the door. Incensed at this affront, I quitted the door, without saying one word, and, as I repassed the parlour, bowed to Miss, who still remained in the same situation, securely screened, as she thought, from view.

This disappointment gave me more uneasiness on

Strap's account than my own; for I was in no danger of dying for love of Melinda; on the contrary, the remembrance of my charming Narcissa was a continual check upon my conscience, during the whole course of my addresses; and perhaps contributed to the bad success of my scheme, by controlling my raptures, and condemning my design.

There was a necessity for informing my companion of everything that happened to me, and I performed this piece of duty in an affected passion, swearing I would be his packhorse no longer, and desiring him to take the management of his affairs into his own hands. This finesse had the desired effect; for, instead of grumbling over my miscarriage, Strap was frightened at the passion I feigned, and begged me, for the love of God, to be appeased; observing, that, although we had suffered a great loss, it was not irreparable; and, if Fortune frowned to-day, she might perhaps smile to-morrow. I pretended to acquiesce in his remarks, praise his equanimity, and promise to improve by misfortune. He, on the other hand, pretended to be perfectly well satisfied with my conduct, and conjured me to follow the dictates of my own reflection; but, in spite of all his affectation, I perceived his inward affliction, and his visage sensibly increased in longitude from that day.

CHAPTER FIFTY

I LONG TO BE REVENGED ON MELINDA — APPLY TO BANTER FOR HIS ASSISTANCE — HE CONTRIVES A SCHEME FOR THAT PURPOSE, WHICH IS PUT IN EXECUTION WITH GREAT SUCCESS — I MAKE AN ATTEMPT ON THE HEART OF MISS GRIPEWELL, BUT AM DISAPPOINTED — GROW MELANCHOLY AT MY DISAPPOINTMENT, AND HAVE RECOURSE TO THE BOTTLE — RECEIVE A BILLET-DOUX — AM RAVISHED WITH THE CONTENTS — FIND MYSELF INVOLVED IN AN INTRIGUE, WHICH I IMAGINED WOULD MAKE MY FORTUNE — AM CONFOUNDED AT MY MISTAKE, WHICH BANISHES ALL THOUGHTS OF MATRIMONY.

IN the meantime, my attention was wholly engrossed in search of another mistress and the desire of being revenged on Melinda, in both which schemes I was very much assisted by Billy Chatter, who was such a necessary creature among the ladies, that in all private dances he engaged the men. To him therefore I applied, desiring he would introduce me to a partner of some figure at the next private assembly, for the sake of a frolic, the intention of which I would afterwards communicate. Billy, who had heard something of the difference between Melinda and me, immediately smoked part of my design, and,

thinking I only wanted to alarm her jealousy a little, promised to gratify my desire, by matching me with a partner worth thirty thousand pounds, whom the ladies of this end of the town had lately taken under their management and protection. Upon further inquiry, I found this person's name was Miss Biddy Gripewell; that her father, who had been a pawnbroker, died intestate, by which means all his substance descended to his daughter, who was so little a favourite, that, could the old man have prevailed with his own rapacious disposition to part with as much money as would have paid the expense of a will, she would have inherited a sixth part of his fortune; that, during his life, far from being educated in a way suitable to such great expectations, she was obliged to live like a servant wench, and do the most menial offices in the family. But his funeral was no sooner performed, than she assumed the fine lady, and found so many people of both sexes to flatter, caress, and instruct her, that, for want of discretion and experience, she was grown insufferably vain and arrogant, and pretended to no less than a duke or earl at least for her husband. That she had the misfortune to be neglected by the English quality, but a certain poor Scottish lord was then making interest to be introduced to her acquaintance. In the meantime, she was fallen into the hands of a notable lady, who had already disposed of her to a lieutenant of foot, a distant relation of her ladyship's, though Miss, as yet, knew nothing of the affair. And, lastly, that, if I proposed to dance with her, I must give him

leave to represent me as a knight or foreign count at least. I was ravished at this piece of information, and consented, for one night, to personate a French marquis, that I might the easier fulfil my revenge.

Having made the appointment with Chatter, I went to Banter's lodgings, as I had by this time conceived a great opinion of his penetration and knowledge; and, after I had enjoined secrecy, told him every circumstance of my disgrace with Melinda, and imparted the plan I had projected to mortify that proud coquette, desiring his advice in improving, and assistance in executing the scheme. Nothing could be more agreeable to his misanthropical temper, than an account of her behaviour and my resentment. He applauded my resolution, and proposed that I should not only provide myself with a proper partner, but also procure such an one for Miss Goosetrap as should infallibly entail upon her the ridicule of all her acquaintance. For this purpose he mentioned his barber, who, he said, was an exceeding coxcomb, lately come from Paris, whose absurd affectation and grimace would easily pass upon her for the sprightly politesse of a gentleman improved by travel. I hugged him for this hint; and he assured me, it would be no difficult matter to make him believe, that Melinda, having seen him by accident, was captivated by his appearance, and longed for his acquaintance. He actually engaged him on this pretence, and painted his good fortune in such colours, that the poor shaver was quite beside himself with joy. He was immediately fitted with a tawdry suit of clothes belonging to Banter, and by

him recommended to Chatter, as a very pretty fellow just returned from his travels. Mr. Billy, who acted as a gentleman usher to a great many of the fair sex in and about town, undertook at once to bespeak Melinda in his behalf; and everything happened according to my wish.

At the time appointed, I appeared dressed to the best advantage; and, in the character of Marquis, had the honour of opening the ball with the rich heiress, who attracted the eyes of the whole company, by the prodigious number of jewels with which she was adorned. Among others, I perceived Melinda, who could no more conceal her envy than astonishment at my success. Her curiosity was still more flagrant and tormenting, for she had never seen Miss Gripewell before; and Chatter, who alone could give her any satisfaction on that head, was engaged in conversation at the other end of the room. I observed her impatience, and exulted in her chagrin; and, after my partner was set, took the opportunity of passing by her to make a slight bow without stopping; which completed my triumph and her indignation. She changed colour, bridled up, assumed an air of disdain, and flirted her fan with such a fury, that it went to pieces in a moment, to the no small entertainment of those who sat near and observed her.

At length, the metamorphosed barber took her out, and acted his part with such ridiculous extravagance, that the mirth of the whole company was excited at his expense, and his partner so much ashamed, that, before the country-dances began,

she retired in great confusion, under pretence of being taken suddenly ill, and was followed by her gallant, who, no doubt, imagined her indisposition was nothing but love; and laid hold of the occasion of conducting her home, to comfort her, with an assurance of his entertaining a reciprocal passion. They were no sooner gone, than an inquisitive whisper of "Who is he?" ran round the room; and Chatter could give no other intelligence about him, than that he was a man of fortune just returned from his travels. I, who alone was acquainted with his real quality, affected ignorance, well knowing that female curiosity would not rest satisfied with such a general account, and that the discovery would proceed with a better grace from anybody than me.

Meanwhile, I was tempted by the richness of the prize, to practise upon Miss Gripewell's heart, but soon found it too well fortified with pride and indifference to yield to any efforts in my own character, and I neither would nor could preserve the title I had borrowed longer than that night.

As I expected, everything came to light next day. The barber, in pure simplicity of heart, detected himself to Melinda, and discovered the foundation of his hopes. She sickened at the affront, and was ashamed to show her face in public for many weeks after this accident. Poor Chatter found it impossible to justify himself to her satisfaction; was in utter disgrace with Miss Gripewell, for having imposed me upon her as a nobleman; and suffered very much in his character and influence among the ladies in general.

Finding my finances diminished more than one half, and my project as little advanced as on the first day of my arrival in town, I began to despair of my success, and grew melancholy at the prospect of approaching want. To dispel the horrors of this fiend, I had recourse to the bottle, and kept more company than ever. I became particularly attached to the playhouse, conversed with the actors behind the scenes, grew acquainted with a body of Templars, and in a short time commenced a professed wit and critic. Indeed, I may say, without vanity, that I was much better qualified than any one of my companions, who were, generally speaking, of all the creatures I ever conversed with, the most ignorant and assuming. By means of these avocations, I got the better of care, and learned to separate my ideas in such a manner, that whenever I was attacked by a gloomy reflection, I could shove it aside, and call in some agreeable reverie to my assistance. This was not the case with Strap, who practised a thousand shifts to conceal the sorrow that preyed upon his carcase, and reduced him to the resemblance of a mere skeleton.

While I thus posted, in a thoughtless manner, towards poverty, I one day received, by the penny-post, a letter written in a woman's hand, containing a great many high-flown compliments, warm protestations of love, couched in a very poetical style, an earnest desire of knowing whether or not my heart was engaged, by leaving an answer at a certain place, directed to R. B., and the whole subscribed, "Your incognita." I was transported with joy on reading

the contents of this billet-doux, which I admired as a masterpiece of tenderness and elegance, and was already up to the ears in love with the author, whom my imagination represented as a lady of fortune, in the bloom of youth and beauty. Elevated with this conjecture, I went to work, and exhausted my invention in composing an answer suitable to the sublimity of her style, and the ardour of her sentiments. I expressed my admiration of her wit in terms the most hyperbolical; and, while I acknowledged myself unworthy of her regard, declared myself enamoured of her understanding; and, in the most pathetic manner, implored the honour of an interview. Having finished this performance, and communicated it to Strap, who skipped about for joy, I despatched him with it to the place appointed, which was the house of a milliner not far from Bond Street, and desired him to keep watch near the door for some time, that he might discover the person who should call for it. In less than an hour he returned with a joyful countenance, and told me, that, soon after he had delivered the letter, a chairman was called, to whom it was given, with directions to carry it to the house of a rich gentleman in the neighbourhood, whither he (Strap) followed him, and saw it put into the hands of a waiting-woman, who paid the messenger, and shut the door. That, upon inquiry at an alehouse hard by, where he called for a pint of beer, he understood, the gentleman to whom the house belonged had an only daughter, very handsome, who would inherit his whole estate, and who certainly was the author of the billet I had received. I was of the

same opinion, and hugging myself in the happy prospect, dressed immediately, and passed in great state by the house that contained my unknown admirer. Nor was my vanity disappointed; for I perceived a beautiful young creature standing at one of the windows of the dining-room, who, I imagined, observed me with more than common curiosity. That I might indulge her view, and at the same time feast my own, I affected to stop, and give orders to Strap, in the street, just opposite to her station, by which means I had an opportunity of seeing her more distinctly, and of congratulating myself on having made a conquest of so much perfection. In a few minutes she retired, and I betook myself to the ordinary, in a rapture of hope, which deprived me of appetite for that meal, and sent me home in the evening to indulge my contemplation.

Early next day, I was favoured with another epistle from my unknown charmer, signifying her unutterable joy at the receipt of mine, which, while it made a tender of my heart, convinced her of the value of it. Above all things, she professed extreme pleasure in finding me so much attached to her understanding, a circumstance that not only flattered her in the most sensible part, but at the same time argued my own sagacity. As for the interview I desired, she assured me, that I could not be more eager for such an occasion than she; but she must not only sacrifice a little more to decorum, but be satisfied of my honourable intentions, before she would grant that request: meanwhile, she gave me to understand, that although she might owe some

deference to the opinion of certain persons, she was resolved, in an affair that so nearly concerned her happiness, to consult her own inclination, preferable to the advice of the whole world; especially as she was urged to such condescension by no consideration of fortune, what she depended upon being her own without restriction or control. Struck with admiration at the philosophy and self-denial of my mistress, who seemed insensible of the beauty she possessed, and, in particular, ravished with that piece of intelligence, by which I learned her fortune was independent, I resumed the pen, launched out into encomiums on the dignity of her sentiments, affected to undervalue the charms of external beauty, pretended to ground my passion on the qualities of her mind, complained of her rigour in sacrificing my repose to an over-scrupulous regard to decorum, and declared the purity of my designs in the most solemn and pathetic vows. This performance being sealed and directed, was sent to the place appointed, by Strap, who, that we might be still the more confirmed in our belief, renewed his watch, and in a little time brought back the same information as before, with this addition, that Miss Sparkle (the name of my correspondent) looking out at the window, no sooner saw the messenger arrive, than she shut the casement in a sort of beautiful confusion, and disappeared; eager, no doubt, to hear from the dear object of her love.

My doubts now vanished, the long-expected port appeared, and I looked upon myself as perfectly secure of that happiness I had been in quest of so

long. After dinner, I sauntered, in company with Doctor Wagtail, to that part of the town in which my inamorata lived; and, as he was a mere register, inquired of him into the name, character, and fortune of everybody who possessed a good house in the streets through which we passed; when it came to his turn to mention Sir John Sparkle, he represented him as a man of an immense estate and narrow disposition, who mewed up his only child, a fine young lady, from the conversation of mankind, under the strict watch and inspection of an old governante, who was either so honest, envious, or insatiable, that nobody had been, as yet, able to make her a friend, or get access to her charge, though numbers attempted it every day; not so much on account of her expectations from her father, who, being a widower, might marry again, and have sons, as for a fortune of twelve thousand pounds left her by an uncle, of which she could not be deprived. This piece of news exactly tallying with the last part of the letter I had been honoured with in the morning, had such an effect on me, that any man, except Wagtail, might have observed my emotion; but his attention was too much engrossed by the contemplation of his own importance, to suffer him to be affected with the deportment of any other body, unless it happened to be so particular, that he could not help taking notice of it.

When I had disengaged myself from him, whose conversation grew insipid to me, I went home and made Strap acquainted with the fruit of my researches. This faithful squire was almost choked

with transports, and even wept with joy; but whether, on account of himself or me, I shall not pretend to determine. Next day a third billet-doux was brought to me, containing many expressions of tenderness, mingled with some affecting doubts, about the artifice of man, the inconstancy of youth, and the jealousy often attending the most sincere passion; withal desiring I would excuse her, if she should try me a little longer, before she declared herself beyond the power of retracting. These interesting scruples added fuel to my flame, and impatience to my hope; I redoubled my complaints of her indifference, and pressed her to an assignation with such fervid entreaties, that, in a few days, she consented to meet me at the house of that milliner who had forwarded all my letters. During the interval between the date of her promise and the hour of appointment, my pride soared beyond all reason and description; I lost all remembrance of the gentle Narcissa, and my thoughts were wholly employed in planning triumphs over the malice and contempt of the world.

At length the happy hour arrived; I flew to the place of rendezvous, and was conducted into an apartment, where I had not waited ten minutes, when I heard the rustling of silk, and the sound of feet ascending the stairs. My heart took the alarm, and beat quick; my cheeks glowed, my nerves thrilled, and my knees shook with ecstasy! I perceived the door opening, saw a gold brocade petticoat advance, and sprung forward to embrace my charmer! Heaven and earth! — how shall I paint my situation,

when I found Miss Sparkle converted into a wrinkled hag, turned of seventy! I was struck dumb with amazement, and petrified with horror! This ancient Urganda perceived my disorder, and, approaching with a languishing air, seized my hand, asking, in a squeaking tone, if I was indisposed. Her monstrous affectation completed the disgust I had conceived for her at first appearance; and it was a long time before I could command myself so much as to behave with common civility. At length, however, I recollected myself, and pronounced an apology for my behaviour, which, I said, proceeded from a dizziness that seized me all of a sudden. My hoary Dulcinea, who, no doubt, had been alarmed at my confusion, no sooner learned the cause to which I now ascribed it, than she discovered her joy in a thousand amorous coquetries, and assumed the sprightly airs of a girl of sixteen. One while, she ogled me with her dim eyes, quenched in rheum; then, as if she was ashamed of that freedom, she affected to look down, blush, and play with her fan; then toss her head, that I might not perceive a palsy that shook it, ask some childish questions with a lisping accent, giggle and grin with her mouth shut, to conceal the ravages of time upon her teeth; leer upon me again, sigh piteously, fling herself about in her chair to show her agility, and act a great many more absurdities that youth and beauty can alone excuse. Shocked as I was at my disappointment, my disposition was incapable of affronting any person who loved me; I therefore endeavoured to put a good face on the matter for the present, resolved to drop the whole

THE MEETING BETWEEN RODERICK AND "MISS SPARKLE"

I was struck dumb with amazement, and petrified with horror

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affair as soon as I should get clear of her company. With this view, I uttered some civil things, and, in particular, desired to know the name and condition of the lady who had honoured me so much. She told me her name was Withers; that she lived with Sir John Sparkle in quality of governess to his only daughter, in which situation she had picked up a comfortable sufficiency to make her easy for life; that she had the pleasure of seeing me at church, where my appearance and deportment made such an impression upon her heart, that she could enjoy no ease until she had inquired into my character, which she found so amiable in all respects, that she yielded to the violence of her inclination, and ventured to declare her passion, with too little regard, perhaps, to the decorum of her sex; but she hoped I would forgive a trespass of which I myself was, in some measure, the cause, and impute her intrusion to the irresistible dictates of love. No decayed rake ever swallowed a bolus with more reluctance than I felt in making a reply suitable to this compliment, when, instead of the jewel, I found the crazy casket only in my power; and yet my hopes began to revive a little, when I considered, that, by carrying on the appearance of an intrigue with the duenna, I might possibly obtain access to her charge. Encouraged by this suggestion, my temper grew more serene, my reserve wore off, I talked *en cavalier*, and even made love to this antiquated coquette, who seemed extremely happy in her adorer, and spread all her allurements to make her imagined conquest more secure. The good woman of the house treated

us with tea and sweetmeats, and afterwards withdrew, like a civil experienced matron as she was. Left to our mutual endearments, Miss Withers (for she was still a maiden) began to talk of matrimony, and expressed so much impatience in all her behaviour, that had she been fifty years younger, I might possibly have gratified her longing without having recourse to the church; but this step my virtue, as well as interest, forbade. When the inclinations of an old maid settle upon a young fellow, he is persecuted with her addresses; but, should he once grant her the favour, he will never be able to disentangle himself from her importunities and reproaches. It was my business to defer the ceremony as long as possible, under the most specious pretences, with a view of becoming acquainted with Miss Sparkle in the meantime; and I did not despair of success, when I considered, that, in the course of our correspondence, I should, in all probability, be invited to visit my mistress in her own apartment, and by these means have an opportunity of conversing with her charming ward. Pleased with this prospect, my heart dilated with joy, I talked in raptures to the stale governante, and kissed her shrivelled hand with great devotion. She was so much transported with her good fortune, that she could not contain her ecstasy, but flew upon me like a tigress, and pressed her skinny lips to mine; when (as it was no doubt concerted by her evil genius) a dose of garlic she had swallowed that morning, to dispel wind I suppose, began to operate with such a sudden explosion, that human nature, circumstanced as I was, could not

endure the shock with any degree of temper. I lost all patience and reflection, flung away from her in an instant, snatched my hat and cane, and ran downstairs as if the devil had me in pursuit, and could scarce refrain the convulsion of my bowels, which were grievously offended by the perfume that assaulted me. Strap, who waited my return with impatience, seeing me arrive in the utmost disorder, stood motionless with apprehension, and durst not inquire into the cause.

After I had washed my mouth more than once, and recruited my spirits with a glass of wine, I recounted to him every particular of what had happened; to which he made no other reply for some time, than lifting up his eyes, clasping his hands, and uttering a hollow groan. At length he observed, in a melancholy tone, that it was a thousand pities my organs were so delicate as to be offended with the smell of garlic. "Ah! God help us," said he, "'t is not the steams of garlic — no, nor of something else, that would give me the least uneasiness; see what it is to be a cobbler's son." I replied hastily, "I wish, then, you would go and retrieve my miscarriage." At this suggestion he started, forced a smile, and left the room, shaking his head. Whether the old gentlewoman resented my abrupt departure so much that her love changed into disdain, or was ashamed to see me on account of her infirmity, I know not; but I was never troubled again with her passion.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

I CULTIVATE AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH TWO NOBLEMEN — AM INTRODUCED TO EARL STRUTWELL — HIS KIND PROMISES AND INVITATION — THE BEHAVIOUR OF HIS PORTER AND LACQUEY — HE RECEIVES ME WITH AN APPEARANCE OF UNCOMMON AFFECTION — UNDERTAKES TO SPEAK IN MY BEHALF TO THE MINISTER — INFORMS ME OF HIS SUCCESS, AND WISHES ME JOY — INTRODUCES A CONVERSATION ABOUT PETRONIUS ARBITER — FALLS IN LOVE WITH MY WATCH, WHICH I PRESS UPON HIM — I MAKE A PRESENT OF A DIAMOND RING TO LORD STRADDLE — IMPART MY GOOD FORTUNE TO STRAP AND BANTER, WHO DISABUSES ME, TO MY UTTER MORTIFICATION.

BAFFLED hitherto in my matrimonial schemes, I began to question my talents for the science of fortune-hunting, and to bend my thoughts towards some employment under the government; with the view of procuring which, I cultivated the acquaintance of Lords Straddle and Swillpot, whose fathers were men of interest at court. I found these young noblemen as open to my advances as I could desire. I accompanied them in their midnight rambles, and often dined with them at taverns, where I had the honour of paying the reckoning.

I one day took the opportunity, while I was loaded with protestations of friendship, to disclose

my desire of being settled in some sinecure, and to solicit their influence in my behalf. Swillpot, squeezing my hand, said I might depend upon his service, by G—d. The other swore that no man would be more proud than he to run my errands. Encouraged by these declarations, I ventured to express an inclination to be introduced to their fathers, who were able to do my business at once. Swillpot frankly owned he had not spoke to his father these three years; and Straddle assured me his father having lately disobliged the minister, by subscribing his name to a protest in the House of Peers, was thereby rendered incapable of serving his friends at present; but he undertook to make me acquainted with Earl Strutwell, who was hand and glove with a certain person who ruled the roast. This offer I embraced with many acknowledgments, and plied him so closely, in spite of a thousand evasions, that he found himself under a necessity of keeping his word, and actually carried me to the levee of this great man, where he left me in a crowd of fellow-dependents, and was ushered to a particular closet audience; from whence in a few minutes he returned with his lordship, who took me by the hand, assured me he would do me all the service he could, and desired to see me often. I was charmed with my reception, and, although I had heard that a courtier's promise is not to be depended upon, I thought I discovered so much sweetness of temper and candour in this earl's countenance, that I did not doubt of finding my account in his protection. I resolved, therefore, to profit by this permission, and waited

on him next audience day, when I was favoured with a particular smile, squeeze of the hand, and a whisper, signifying that he wanted half an hour's conversation with me in private, when he should be disengaged, and for that purpose desired me to come and drink a dish of chocolate with him to-morrow morning. This invitation, which did not a little flatter my vanity and expectation, I took care to observe, and went to his lordship's house at the time appointed. Having rapped at the gate, the porter unbolted and kept it half open, placing himself in the gap, like soldiers in a breach, to dispute my passage. I asked if his lord was stirring? He answered with a surly aspect, "No." "At what hour does he commonly rise?" said I. "Sometimes sooner, sometimes later," said he, closing the door upon me by degrees. I then told him, I was come by his lordship's own appointment; to which intimation this Cerberus replied, "I have received no orders about the matter;" and was upon the point of shutting me out, when I recollected myself all of a sudden, and, slipping a crown into his hand, begged as a favour that he would inquire, and let me know whether or not the earl was up. The grim janitor relented at the touch of my money, which he took with all the indifference of a tax-gatherer, and showed me into a parlour, where, he said, I might amuse myself till such time as his lord should be awake. I had not sat ten minutes in this place, when a footman entered, and, without speaking, stared at me; I interpreted this piece of his behaviour into, "Pray, sir, what is your business?"

and asked the same question I had put to the porter, when I accosted him first. The lacquey made the same reply, and disappeared before I could get any further intelligence. In a little time he returned, on pretence of poking the fire, and looked at me again with great earnestness; upon which I began to perceive his meaning, and tipping him with half a crown, desired he would be so good as to fall upon some method of letting the earl know that I was in the house. He made a low bow, said "Yes, sir," and vanished. This bounty was not thrown away, for in an instant he came back, and conducted me to a chamber, where I was received with great kindness and familiarity by his lordship, whom I found just risen, in his morning gown and slippers. After breakfast, he entered into a particular conversation with me about my travels, the remarks I had made abroad, and examined me to the full extent of my understanding. My answers seemed to please him very much; he frequently squeezed my hand, and looking at me with a singular complacency in his countenance, bade me depend upon his good offices with the ministry in my behalf. "Young men of your qualifications," said he, "ought to be cherished by every administration. For my own part, I see so little merit in the world, that I have laid it down as a maxim, to encourage the least appearance of genius and virtue to the utmost of my power — you have a great deal of both; and will not fail of making a figure one day, if I am not mistaken, but you must lay your account with mounting by gradual steps to the summit of your fortune. Rome was not built in

a day. As you understand the languages perfectly well, how would you like to cross the sea as secretary to an embassy?" I assured his lordship, with great eagerness, that nothing could be more agreeable to my inclination. Upon which he bade me make myself easy, my business was done, for he had a place of that kind in his view. This piece of generosity affected me so much, that I was unable for some time to express my gratitude, which at length broke out in acknowledgments of my own unworthiness, and encomiums on his benevolence. I could not even help shedding tears at the goodness of this noble lord, who no sooner perceived them, than he caught me in his arms, and hugged and kissed me with a seemingly paternal affection. Confounded at this uncommon instance of fondness for a stranger, I remained a few moments silent and ashamed, then rose and took my leave, after he had assured me that he would speak to the minister in my favour that very day; and desired that I would not for the future give myself the trouble of attending at his levee, but come at the same hour every day when he should be at leisure, that is, three times a week.

Though my hopes were now very sanguine, I determined to conceal my prospect from everybody, even from Strap, until I should be more certain of success; and, in the meantime, give my patron no respite from my solicitations. When I renewed my visit, I found the street door open to me, as if by enchantment; but, in my passage towards the presence room, I was met by the valet-de-chambre, who cast some furious looks at me, the meaning of which I

could not comprehend. The earl saluted me at entrance with a tender embrace, and wished me joy of his success with the premier, who, he said, had preferred his recommendation to that of two other noblemen very urgent in behalf of their respective friends, and absolutely promised that I should go to a certain foreign court, in quality of secretary to an ambassador and plenipotentiary, who was to set out in a few weeks, on an affair of vast importance to the nation. I was thunderstruck with my good fortune, and could make no other reply, than kneel, and attempt to kiss my benefactor's hand, which submission he would not permit, but, raising me up, pressed me to his breast with surprising emotion, and told me he had now taken upon himself the care of making my fortune. What enhanced the value of the benefit still more, was his making light of the favour, and shifting the conversation to another subject. Among other topics of discourse, that of the *Belles-Lettres* was introduced, upon which his lordship held forth with great taste and erudition, and discovered an intimate knowledge of the authors of antiquity. "Here's a book," said he, taking one from his bosom, "written with great elegance and spirit, and though the subject may give offence to some narrow-minded people, the author will always be held in esteem by every person of wit and learning." So saying, he put into my hand Petronius Arbiter, and asked my opinion of his wit and manner. I told him, that, in my opinion, he wrote with great ease and vivacity, but was withal so lewd and indecent, that he ought to find no quarter or protection among people of morals and

taste. "I own," replied the earl, "that his taste in love is generally decried, and indeed condemned by our laws; but perhaps that may be more owing to prejudice and misapprehension, than to true reason and deliberation. The best man among the ancients is said to have entertained that passion; one of the wisest of their legislators has permitted the indulgence of it in his commonwealth; the most celebrated poets have not scrupled to avow it. At this day it prevails not only over all the East, but in most parts of Europe; in our own country it gains ground apace, and in all probability will become in a short time a more fashionable vice than simple fornication. Indeed, there is something to be said in vindication of it; for, notwithstanding the severity of the law against offenders in this way, it must be confessed that the practice of this passion is unattended with that curse and burden upon society, which proceeds from a race of miserable and deserted bastards, who are either murdered by their parents, deserted to the utmost want and wretchedness, or bred up to prey upon the commonwealth. And it likewise prevents the debauchery of many a young maiden, and the prostitution of honest men's wives; not to mention the consideration of health, which is much less liable to be impaired in the gratification of this appetite, than in the exercise of common venery, which, by ruining the constitutions of our young men, has produced a puny progeny, that degenerates from generation to generation. Nay, I have been told, that there is another motive, perhaps more powerful than all these, that induces people to cultivate this in-

clination, namely, the exquisite pleasure attending its success."

From this discourse, I began to be apprehensive that his lordship, finding I had travelled, was afraid I might have been infected with this spurious and sordid desire abroad, and took this method of sounding my sentiments on the subject. Fired at this supposed suspicion, I argued against it with great warmth, as an appetite unnatural, absurd, and of pernicious consequence; and declared my utter detestation and abhorrence of it in these lines of the satirist: —

> "Eternal infamy the wretch confound
> Who planted first that vice on British ground!
> A vice! that, 'spite of sense and nature, reigns,
> And poisons genial love, and manhood stains."

The earl smiled at my indignation, told me he was glad to find my opinion of the matter so conformable to his own, and that what he had advanced was only to provoke me to an answer, with which he professed himself perfectly well pleased.

After I had enjoyed a long audience, I happened to look at my watch, in order to regulate my motions by it; and his lordship observing the chased case, desired to see the devise, and examine the execution, which he approved, with some expressions of admiration. Considering the obligations I lay under to his lordship, I thought there could not be a fitter opportunity than the present to manifest in some shape my gratitude; I therefore begged he would do me the honour to accept of the watch as a small testimony of the sense I had of his lordship's generosity;

but he refused it in a peremptory manner, and said he was sorry I should entertain such a mercenary opinion of him, observing at the same time, that it was the most beautiful piece of workmanship he had ever seen, and desiring to know where he could have such another. I begged a thousand pardons for the freedom I had taken, which I hoped he would impute to nothing else but the highest veneration for his person; told him that, as it came to my hand by accident in France, I could give him no information about the maker, for there was no name on the inside; and once more humbly entreated that he would indulge me so far as to use it for my sake. He was still positive in refusing it, but was pleased to thank me for my generous offer, saying, it was a present that no nobleman need be ashamed receiving; though he was resolved to show his disinterestedness with regard to me, for whom he had conceived a particular friendship; and insisted, if I was willing to part with the watch, upon knowing what it had cost, that he might at least indemnify me by refunding the money. On the other hand, I assured his lordship, that I should look upon it as an uncommon mark of distinction, if he would take it without further question; and, rather than disoblige me, he was at last persuaded to put it in his pocket, to my no small satisfaction, who took my leave immediately, after having received a kind squeeze, and an injunction to depend upon his promise.

Buoyed up with this reception, my heart opened; I gave away a guinea among the lacqueys who escorted me to the door, flew to the lodgings of Lord

Straddle, upon whom I forced my diamond ring as an acknowledgment for the great service he had done me, and from hence hied me home, with an intent of sharing my happiness with honest Strap. I determined, however, to heighten his pleasure by depressing his spirits at first, and then bringing in the good news with double relish. For this purpose, I affected the appearance of disappointment and chagrin, and told him in an abrupt manner, that I had lost the watch and diamond. Poor Hugh, who had been already harassed into a consumption by intelligence of this sort, no sooner heard these words, than, unable to contain himself, he cried, with distraction in his looks, "God in heaven forbid!" I could carry on the farce no longer, but, laughing in his face, told him everything that had passed, as above recited. His features were immediately unbended, and the transition was so affecting, that he wept with joy, and called my Lord Strutwell by the appellations of Jewel, Phœnix, *Rara avis;* praising God, that there was still some virtue left among our nobility. Our mutual congratulations being over, we gave way to our imaginations, and anticipated our happiness by prosecuting our success through the different steps of promotion, till I arrived at the rank of prime minister, and he to that of my first secretary.

Intoxicated with these ideas, I went to the ordinary, where, meeting with Banter, I communicated the whole affair in confidence to him, concluding with an assurance that I would do him all the service in my power. He heard me to an end with great patience, then regarding me a good while with a look

of disdain, pronounced, "So your business is done, you think?" "As good as done, I believe," said I. "I'll tell you," replied he, "what will do it still more effectually, a halter! — 'Sdeath! if I had been such a gull to two such scoundrels as Strutwell and Straddle, I would, without any more ado, tuck myself up." Shocked at this exclamation, I desired him, with some confusion, to explain himself; upon which he gave me to understand, that Straddle was a poor contemptible wretch, who lived by borrowing and pimping for his fellow peers; that, in consequence of this last capacity, he had doubtless introduced me to Strutwell, who was so notorious for a passion for his own sex, that he was amazed his character had never reached my ears; and that, far from being able to obtain for me the post he had promised, his interest at court was so low, that he could scarce provide for a superannuated footman once a year, in the customs, or excise. That it was a common thing for him to amuse strangers whom his jackals ran down, with such assurances and caresses as he had bestowed on me, until he had stripped them of their cash, and everything valuable about them — very often of their chastity, and then leave them a prey to want and infamy. That he allowed his servants no other wages than that part of the spoil which they could glean by their industry; and the whole of his conduct towards me was so glaring, that nobody who knew anything of mankind could have been imposed upon by his insinuations.

I leave the reader to judge how I relished this piece of information, which precipitated me from the

most exalted pinnacle of hope, to the lowest abyss of despondence; and well-nigh determined me to take Banter's advice, and finish my chagrin with a halter. I had no room to suspect the veracity of my friend, because, upon recollection, I found every circumstance of Strutwell's behaviour exactly tallying with the character he had described. His hugs, embraces, squeezes, and eager looks, were now no longer a mystery, no more than his defence of Petronius, and the jealous frown of his valet-de-chambre, who, it seems, had been the favourite pathic of his lord.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

I ATTEMPT TO RECOVER MY WATCH AND JEWEL, BUT TO NO PURPOSE — RESOLVE TO REVENGE MYSELF ON STRUTWELL, BY MY IMPORTUNITY — AM REDUCED TO MY LAST GUINEA — OBLIGED TO INFORM STRAP OF MY NECESSITY, WHO IS ALMOST DISTRACTED WITH THE NEWS — BUT, NEVERTHELESS, OBLIGED TO PAWN MY BEST SWORD FOR PRESENT SUBSISTENCE — THAT SMALL SUPPLY BEING EXHAUSTED, I AM ALMOST STUPEFIED WITH MY MISFORTUNES — GO TO THE GAMING TABLE, BY THE ADVICE OF BANTER, AND COME OFF WITH UNEXPECTED SUCCESS — STRAP'S ECSTASY — MRS. GAWKY WAITS UPON ME, PROFESSES REMORSE FOR HER PERFIDY, AND IMPLORES MY ASSISTANCE — I DO MYSELF A PIECE OF JUSTICE BY HER MEANS, AND AFTERWARDS RECONCILE HER TO HER FATHER.

I WAS so confounded, that I could make no reply to Banter, who reproached me with great indignation for having thrown away upon rascals that which, had it been converted into ready money, would have supported the rank of a gentleman for some months, and enabled me, at the same time, to oblige my friends. Stupefied as I was, I could easily divine the source of his concern, but sneaked away in a solitary manner, without yielding the least answer to his expostulations, and began to deliberate with myself in what manner

I should attempt to retrieve the movables I had so foolishly lost. I should have thought it no robbery to take them again by force, could I have done it without any danger of being detected; but as I could have no such opportunity, I resolved to work by finesse, and go immediately to the lodgings of Straddle, where I was so fortunate as to find him. "My lord," said I, "I have just now recollected, that the diamond I had the honour of presenting to you is loosened a little in the socket, and there is a young fellow just arrived from Paris, who is reckoned the best jeweller in Europe; I knew him in France, and if your lordship will give me leave, will carry the ring to him to be set to rights." His lordship was not to be caught in this snare; he thanked me for my offer, and told me, that, having himself observed the defect, he had already sent it to his own jeweller to be mended. And, indeed, by this time, I believe it was in the jeweller's hands, though not in order to be mended, for it stood in need of no alteration.

Balked in this piece of politics, I cursed my simplicity, but resolved to play a surer game with the earl, which I thus devised. I did not doubt of being admitted into familiar conversation with him as before, and hoped by some means to get the watch into my hand; then, on pretence of winding or playing with it, drop it on the floor, when in all probability the fall would disorder the work so as to stop its motion. This event would furnish me with an opportunity of insisting upon carrying it away, in order to be repaired; and then I should have been in no hurry to bring it back. What pity it was I could

not find an occasion of putting this fine scheme in execution! When I went to renew my visit to his lordship, my access to the parlour was as free as ever; but, after I had waited some time, the valet-de-chambre came in with his lordship's compliments, and a desire to see me to-morrow at his levee, he being at present so much indisposed, that he could not see company. I interpreted this message into a bad omen, and came away muttering curses against his lordship's politeness, and ready to go to loggerheads with myself for being so egregiously duped. But that I might have some satisfaction for the loss I had sustained, I besieged him closely at his levee, and persecuted him with my solicitations; not without faint hopes, indeed, of reaping something more from my industry, than the bare pleasure of making him uneasy; though I could never obtain another private hearing, during the whole course of my attendance; neither had I resolution enough to undeceive Strap, whose looks in a little time were so whetted with impatience, that, whenever I came home, his eyes devoured me, as it were, with eagerness of attention. At length, however, finding myself reduced to my last guinea, I was compelled to disclose my necessity, though I endeavoured to sweeten the discovery by rehearsing to him the daily assurances I received from my patron. But these promises were not of efficacy sufficient to support the spirits of my friend, who no sooner understood the lowness of my finances, than, uttering a dreadful groan, he exclaimed, "In the name of God, what shall we do?" In order to comfort him, I said, that many of my

acquaintance, who were in a worse condition than we, supported, notwithstanding, the character of gentlemen; and, advising him to thank God that we had as yet incurred no debt, proposed he should pawn my sword of steel inlaid with gold, and trust to my discretion for the rest. This expedient was wormwood and gall to poor Strap, who, in spite of his invincible affection for me, still retained notions of economy and expense suitable to the narrowness of his education; nevertheless, he complied with my request, and raised seven pieces on the sword in a twinkling. This supply, inconsiderable as it was, made me as happy for the present, as if I had kept five hundred pounds in bank; for by this time I was so well skilled in procrastinating every troublesome reflection, that the prospect of want seldom affected me very much, let it be ever so near. And now, indeed, it was nearer than I imagined; my landlord having occasion for money, put me in mind of my being indebted to him five guineas in lodging, and, telling me he had a sum to make up, begged I would excuse his importunity, and discharge the debt. Though I could ill spare so much cash, my pride took the resolution of disbursing it. This I did in a cavalier manner, after he had written a discharge, telling him with an air of scorn and resentment, I saw he was resolved that I should not be long in his books; while Strap, who stood by, and knew my circumstances, wrung his hands in secret, gnawed his nether lip, and turned yellow with despair. Whatever appearance of indifference my vanity enabled me to put on, I was thunderstruck with this demand, which I had no sooner satisfied,

than I hastened into company, with a view of beguiling my cares with conversation, or of drowning them with wine.

After dinner, a party was accordingly made in the coffee-house, from whence we adjourned to the tavern, where, instead of sharing the mirth of the company, I was as much chagrined at their good-humour as a damned soul in hell would be at a glimpse of heaven. In vain did I swallow bumper after bumper; the wine had lost its effect upon me, and, far from raising my dejected spirits, could not even lay me asleep. Banter, who was the only intimate I had (Strap excepted), perceived my anxiety, and, when we broke up, reproached me with pusillanimity, for being cast down at any disappointment that such a rascal as Strutwell could be the occasion of. I told him I did not at all see how Strutwell's being a rascal alleviated my misfortune; and gave him to understand, that my present grief did not so much proceed from that disappointment, as from the low ebb of my fortune, which was sunk to something less than two guineas. At this declaration, he cried, "Psha! is that all?" and assured me there was a thousand ways of living in town without a fortune, he himself having subsisted many years entirely by his wit. I expressed an eager desire of being acquainted with some of these methods; and he, without further expostulation, bade me follow him.

He conducted me to a house under the piazzas in Covent Garden, which we entered, and, having delivered our swords to a grim fellow, who demanded them at the foot of the staircase, ascended to the

second story, where I saw multitudes of people standing round two gaming tables, loaded in a manner with gold and silver. My conductor told me this was the house of a worthy Scotch lord, who, using the privilege of his peerage, had set up public gaming tables, from the profits of which he drew a comfortable livelihood. He then explained the difference between the *sitters* and the *betters*; characterised the first as old rooks, and the last as bubbles; and advised me to try my fortune at the silver table, by betting a crown at a time. Before I would venture anything, I considered the company more particularly; and there appeared such a group of villanous faces, that I was struck with horror and astonishment at the sight! I signified my surprise to Banter, who whispered in my ear, that the bulk of those present were sharpers, highwaymen, and apprentices, who, having embezzled their masters' cash, made a desperate push in this place, to make up their deficiencies. This account did not encourage me to hazard any part of my small pittance; but, at length, being teased by the importunities of my friend, who assured me there was no danger of being ill used, because people were hired by the owner to see justice done to everybody, I began by risking one shilling, and in less than an hour my winning amounted to thirty. Convinced by this time of the fairness of the game, and animated with success, there was no need of further persuasion to continue the play. I lent Banter (who seldom had any money in his pocket) a guinea, which he carried to the gold table, and lost in a moment. He would have borrowed another, but,

finding me deaf to his arguments, went away in a pet. Meanwhile, my gain advanced to six pieces, and my desire for more increased in proportion; so that I moved to the higher table, where I laid half a guinea on every throw; and fortune still favouring me, I became a sitter, in which capacity I remained until it was broad day; when I found myself, after many vicissitudes, one hundred and fifty guineas in pocket.

Thinking it now high time to retire with my booty, I asked if anybody would take my place, and made a motion to rise; upon which an old Gascon, who sat opposite to me, and of whom I had won a little money, started up with fury in his looks, crying, "*Restez, foutre, reste, il faut donner-moi mon ravanchio!*" At the same time, a Jew who sat near the other, insinuated that I was more beholden to art than fortune for what I had got; that he had observed me wipe the table very often, and that some of the divisions seemed to be greasy. This intimation produced a great deal of clamour against me, especially among the losers, who threatened with many oaths and imprecations to take me up by a warrant as a sharper, unless I would compromise the affair by refunding the greatest part of my winning. Though I was far from being easy under this accusation, I relied upon my innocence, threatened in my turn to prosecute the Jew for defamation, and boldly offered to submit my cause to the examination of any justice in Westminster; but they knew themselves too well to put their characters on that issue, and finding I was not to be intimidated into any concession, dropped their plea, and made way for me

to withdraw. I would not, however, stir from the table, until the Israelite had retracted what he had said to my disadvantage, and asked pardon before the whole assembly.

As I marched out with my prize, I happened to tread upon the toes of a tall raw-boned fellow, with a hooked nose, fierce eyes, black thick eyebrows, a pigtail wig of the same colour, and a formidable hat pulled over his forehead, who stood gnawing his fingers in the crowd, and no sooner felt the application of my shoe-heel, than he roared out in a tremendous voice, "Blood and wounds! you son of a w—e, what's that for?" I asked pardon with a great deal of submission, and protested I had no intention of hurting him. But the more I humbled myself, the more he stormed, and insisted upon gentlemanly satisfaction, at the same time provoking me with scandalous names that I could not put up with; so that I gave a loose to my passion, returned his Billingsgate, and challenged him to follow me down to the piazzas. His indignation cooling as mine warmed, he refused my invitation, saying, he would choose his own time, and returned towards the table, muttering threats, which I neither dreaded, nor distinctly heard; but descending with great deliberation, received my sword from the doorkeeper, whom I gratified with a guinea, according to the custom of that place, and went home in a rapture of joy.

My faithful valet, who had sat up all night in the utmost uneasiness on my account, let me in with his face beslubbered with tears, and followed me to my

chamber, where he stood silent like a condemned criminal, in expectation of hearing that every shilling was spent. I guessed the situation of his thoughts, and, assuming a sullen look, bade him fetch me some water to wash. He replied, without lifting his eyes from the ground, "In my simple conjecture you have more occasion for rest, not having, I suppose, slept these four-and-twenty hours." "Bring me some water," said I, in a peremptory tone; upon which he sneaked away, shrugging his shoulders. Before he returned, I had spread my whole stock on the table in the most ostentatious manner; so that, when it first saluted his view, he stood like one entranced, and, having rubbed his eyes more than once, to assure himself of his being awake, broke out into, "Lord have mercy upon us! what a vast treasure is here!" "'T is all our own, Strap," said I; "take what is necessary, and redeem the sword immediately." He advanced towards the table, stopped short by the way, looked at the money and me by turns, and, with a wildness in his countenance, produced from joy checked by distrust, cried, "I dare say it is honestly come by." To remove his scruples, I made him acquainted with the whole story of my success, which when he heard, he danced about the room in an ecstasy, crying, "God be praised! a white stone! — God be praised! a white stone!" so that I was afraid the sudden change of fortune had disordered his intellects, and that he was run mad with joy. Extremely concerned at this event, I attempted to reason him out of his frenzy, but to no purpose; for, without regarding

chamber, where he stood silent like a condemned criminal, in expectation of hearing that every shilling was spent. I guessed the situation of his thoughts, and, assuming a sullen look, bade him fetch me some water to wash. He replied, without lifting his eyes from the ground, "In my simple conjecture you have more occasion for rest, not having, I suppose, slept these four-and-twenty hours." "Bring me some water," said I, in a peremptory tone; upon which he sneaked away, shrugging his shoulders. Before he returned, I had spread my whole stock on the table in the most ostentatious manner, so that, when it first saluted his view, he stood like one entranced, and, having rubbed his [illegible] than once, to assure himself of his being [illegible] out into, "Lord have mercy upon us! [illegible] treasure is here!" "'Tis all our own, [illegible] I: "take what is necessary, and redeem [illegible] immediately." He advanced towards the [illegible] pped short by the way, looked at the money [illegible] by turns, and, with a wildness in his countenance, produced from [illegible] checked by distrust, cried, "I dare say it is honestly come by." To remove his scruples, I made him acquainted with the whole story of my success, which when he heard, he danced about the room in an ecstasy, crying, "God be praised! a white stone! — God be praised! a white stone!" so that I was afraid the sudden change of fortune had disordered his intellects, and that he [illegible] mad with joy. Extremely concerned at [illegible], I attempted to reason him out of his [illegible] but to no purpose, for, without regarding

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what I said, he continued to frisk up and down, and repeat his rhapsody of "God be praised! a white stone!" At last I rose in the utmost consternation, and, laying violent hands upon him, put a stop to his extravagance, by fixing him down to a settee that was in the room. This constraint banished his delirium; he started, as if just awoke, and, terrified at my behaviour, cried, "What is the matter?" When he learned the cause of my apprehension, he was ashamed of his transports, and told me that in mentioning the white stone, he alluded to the *dies fasti* of the Romans, *albo lapide notati*.

Having no inclination to sleep, I secured my cash, dressed, and was just going abroad, when the servant of the house told me there was a gentlewoman at the door, who wanted to speak with me. Surprised at this information, I bade Strap show her up, and in less than a minute saw a young woman of a shabby, decayed appearance enter my room. After half a dozen curtseys, she began to sob, and told me her name was Gawky; upon which information I immediately recollected the features of Miss Lavement, who had been the first occasion of my misfortunes. Though I had all the reason in the world to resent her treacherous behaviour to me, I was moved at her distress, and professing my sorrow at seeing her so reduced, desired her to sit, and inquired into the particulars of her situation. She fell upon her knees, and implored my forgiveness for the injuries she had done me, protesting before God, that she was forced, against her inclination, into that hellish conspiracy which had almost deprived me of my life, by the

entreaties of her husband, who, having been afterwards renounced by his father, on account of his marriage with her, and unable to support a family on his pay, left his wife at her father's house, and went with the regiment to Germany, where he was broke for misbehaviour at the battle of Dettingen, since which time she had heard no tidings of him. She then gave me to understand, with many symptoms of penitence, that it was her misfortune to bear a child four months after marriage, by which event her parents were so incensed, that she was turned out of doors with the infant, that died soon after; and had hitherto subsisted in a miserable indigent manner, on the extorted charity of a few friends, who were now quite tired of giving. That, not knowing where or how to support herself one day longer, she had fled for succour even to me, who, of all mankind, had the least cause to assist her, relying upon the generosity of my disposition, which, she hoped, would be pleased with this opportunity of avenging itself in the noblest manner on the wretch who had wronged me. I was very much affected with her discourse, and having no cause to suspect the sincerity of her repentance, raised her up, freely pardoned all she had done against me, and promised to befriend her as much as lay in my power.

Since my last arrival in London, I had made no advances to the apothecary, imagining it would be impossible for me to make my innocence appear, so unhappily was my accusation circumstanced. Strap indeed had laboured to justify me to the school-

master; but, far from succeeding in his attempt, Mr. Concordance dropped all correspondence with him, because he refused to quit his connexion with me. Things being in this situation, I thought a fairer opportunity of vindicating my character could not offer than that which now presented itself. I therefore stipulated with Mrs. Gawky, that, before I would yield her the least assistance, she should do me the justice to clear my reputation, by explaining upon oath, before a magistrate, the whole of the conspiracy, as it had been executed against me. When she had given me this satisfaction, I presented her with five guineas, a sum so much above her expectation, that she could scarce believe the evidence of her senses, and was ready to worship me for my benevolence. The declaration, signed with her own hand, I sent to her father, who, upon recollecting and comparing the circumstances of my charge, was convinced of my integrity, and waited on me next day, in company with his friend the schoolmaster, to whom he had communicated my vindication. After mutual salutation, Monsieur Lavement began a long apology for the unjust treatment I had received; but I saved him a good deal of breath, by interrupting his harangue, and assuring him, that, far from entertaining a resentment against him, I thought myself obliged to his lenity, which allowed me to escape, after such strong presumptions of guilt appeared against me. Mr. Concordance, thinking it now his turn to speak, observed, that Mr. Random had too much candour and sagacity to be disobliged at their conduct, which, all things considered, could

not have been otherwise, with any honesty of intention. "Indeed," said he, "if the plot had been unravelled to us by any supernatural intelligence, if it had been whispered by a genie, communicated by a dream, or revealed by an angel from on high, we should have been to blame in crediting ocular demonstration: but, as we are left in the midst of mortality, it cannot be expected we should be incapable of imposition. I do assure you, Mr. Random, no man on earth is more pleased than I am at this triumph of your character; and, as the news of your misfortune panged me to the very entrails, this manifestation of your innocence makes my midriff quiver with joy." I thanked him for his concern, desired them to undeceive those of their acquaintance who judged harshly of me, and, having treated them with a glass of wine, represented to Lavement the deplorable condition of his daughter, and pleaded her cause so effectually, that he consented to settle a small annuity on her for life; but could not be persuaded to take her home, because her mother was so much incensed that she would never see her.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

I PURCHASE NEW CLOTHES — REPRIMAND STRUTWELL AND STRADDLE — BANTER PROPOSES ANOTHER MATRIMONIAL SCHEME — I ACCEPT OF HIS TERMS — SET OUT FOR BATH IN A STAGE COACH, WITH THE YOUNG LADY AND HER MOTHER — THE BEHAVIOUR OF AN OFFICER AND LAWYER — OUR FELLOW-TRAVELLERS DESCRIBED — A SMART DIALOGUE BETWEEN MY MISTRESS AND THE CAPTAIN.

HAVING finished this affair to my satisfaction, I found myself perfectly at ease, and, looking upon the gaming-table as a certain resource for a gentleman in want, became more gay than ever. Although my clothes were almost as good as new, I grew ashamed of wearing them, because I thought everybody, by this time, had got an inventory of my wardrobe. For which reason I disposed of a good part of my apparel to a salesman in Monmouth Street for half the value, and bought two new suits with the money. I likewise purchased a plain gold watch, despairing of recovering that which I had so foolishly given to Strutwell, whom, notwithstanding, I still continued to visit at his levee, until the ambassador he had mentioned set out with a secretary of his own choosing. I thought myself then at liberty to expostulate

with his lordship, whom I treated with great freedom in a letter, for amusing me with vain hopes, when he neither had the power nor inclination to provide for me. Nor was I less reserved with Straddle, whom I in person reproached for misrepresenting to me the character of Strutwell, which I did not scruple to aver was infamous in every respect. He seemed very much enraged at my freedom, talked a great deal about his quality and honour, and began to make some comparisons which I thought so injurious to mine, that I demanded an explanation with great warmth; and he was mean enough to equivocate, and condescend in such a manner, that I left him with a hearty contempt of his behaviour.

About this time, Banter, who had observed a surprising and sudden alteration in my appearance and disposition, began to inquire very minutely into the cause; and as I did not think fit to let him know the true state of the affair, lest he might make free with my purse, on the strength of having proposed the scheme that filled it, I told him that I had received a small supply from a relation in the country, who at the same time had promised to use all his interest, which was not small, in soliciting some post for me that should make me easy for life. "If that be the case," said Banter, "perhaps you won't care to mortify yourself a little, in making your fortune another way. I have a relation who is to set out for Bath next week, with an only daughter, who, being sickly and decrepit, intends to drink the waters for the recovery of her health. Her father, who was a rich Turkey merchant, died about a year ago, and left her

with a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, under the sole management of her mother, who is my kinswoman. I would have put in for the plate myself, but there is a breach at present between the old woman and me. You must know, that some time ago I borrowed a small sum of her, and promised, it seems, to pay it before a certain time; but, being disappointed in my expectation of money from the country, the day elapsed without my being able to take up my note; upon which she wrote a peremptory letter, threatening to arrest me, if I did not pay the debt immediately. Nettled at this precise behaviour, I sent a d—ned severe answer, which enraged her so much that she actually took out a writ against me. Whereupon, finding the thing grow serious, I got a friend to advance the money for me, discharged the debt, went to her house, and abused her for her unfriendly dealing. She was provoked by my reproaches, and scolded in her turn. The little deformed urchin joined her mother with such virulence and volubility of tongue, that I was fain to make my retreat, after having been honoured with a great many scandalous epithets, which gave me plainly to understand that I had nothing to hope from the esteem of the one, or the affection of the other. As they are both utter strangers to life, it is a thousand to one that the girl will be picked up by some scoundrel or other at Bath, if I don't provide for her otherwise. You are a well-looking fellow, Random, and can behave as demurely as a Quaker. Now, if you will give me an obligation for five hundred pounds, to be paid six months after your marriage, I will

put you in a method of carrying her in spite of all opposition."

This proposal was too advantageous for me to be refused. The writing was immediately drawn up and executed; and Banter giving me notice of the time when, and the stage coach in which they were to set out, I bespoke a place in the same convenience, and having hired a horse for Strap, who was charmed with the prospect, set forward accordingly.

As we embarked before day, I had not the pleasure for some time of seeing Miss Snapper (that was the name of my mistress), nor even of perceiving the number and sex of my fellow-travellers, although I guessed that the coach was full, by the difficulty I found in seating myself. The first five minutes passed in a general silence, when, all of a sudden, the coach heeling to one side, a boisterous voice pronounced, "To the right and left, cover your flanks, d—me! whiz!" I easily discovered by the tone and matter of this exclamation, that it was uttered by a son of Mars; neither was it hard to conceive the profession of another person who sat opposite to me, and observed, that we ought to have been well satisfied of the security before we entered upon the premises. These two sallies had not the desired effect. We continued a good while as mute as before, till at length the gentleman of the sword, impatient of longer silence, made a second effort, by swearing he had got into a meeting of Quakers. "I believe so, too," said a shrill voice at my left hand, "for the spirit of folly begins to move." "Out with it, then, madam," replied the soldier. "You seem to have no

occasion for a midwife," cried the lady. "D—n my blood!" exclaimed the other, "a man can't talk to a woman, but she immediately thinks of a midwife." "True, sir," said she, "I long to be delivered." "What! of a mouse, madam?" said he. "No, sir," said she, "of a fool." "Are you far gone with a fool?" said he. "Little more than two miles," said she. "By Gad, you are a wit, madam!" cried the officer. "I wish I could with any justice return the compliment," said the lady. "Zounds, I have done," said he. "Your bolt is soon shot, according to the old proverb," said she. The warrior's powder was quite spent; the lawyer advised him to drop the prosecution; and a grave matron, who sat on the left hand of the victorious wit, told her, she must not let her tongue run so fast among strangers.

This reprimand, softened with the appellation of *child*, convinced me that the satirical lady was no other than Miss Snapper, and I resolved to regulate my conduct accordingly. The champion, finding himself so smartly handled, changed his battery, and began to expatiate on his own exploits. "You talk of shot, madam," said he, "d—me! I have both given and received some shot in my time. I was wounded in the shoulder by a pistol-ball at Dettingen, where — I say nothing — but by G—d! if it had not been for me — all 's one for that — I despise boasting, d—me! whiz!" So saying, he whistled one part and hummed another of [the] Black Joke; then, addressing himself to the lawyer, went on thus: "Would n't you think it d—ned hard, after having,

at the risk of your life, recovered the standard of a regiment, that had been lost, to receive no preferment for your pains! I don't choose to name no names, sink me! but howsomever, this I will refer, by G—d; and that is this, a musketeer of the French guards, having taken a standard from a certain cornet of a certain regiment, d—me! was retreating with his prize as fast as his horse's heels could carry him, sink me! Upon which I snatched up a firelock that belonged to a dead man, d—me! whiz! and shot his horse under him, d—n my blood! The fellow got upon his feet, and began to repose me; upon which I charged my bayonet breast high, and ran him through the body, by G—d! One of his comrades coming to his assistance, shot me in the shoulder, as I told you before; another gave me a confusion on the head with the butt-end of his carbine; but, d—me! that did not signify. I killed one, put the other to flight, and, taking up the standard, carried it off very deliberately. But the best joke of all was, the son of a b—h of a cornet who had surrendered it in a cowardly manner, seeing it in my possession, demanded it from me, in the front of the line. 'D—n my blood,' says he, 'where did you find my standard?' says he. 'D—n my blood,' said I, 'where,' said I, 'did you lose it?' said I. 'That's nothing to you,' says he—''t is my standard,' says he, 'and by G—d I'll have it,' says he. 'D—tion seize me,' says I, 'if you shall,' says I, 'till I have first delivered it to the general,' says I; and accordingly I went to the headquarters, after the battle, and delivered it to my Lord Stair, who promised to do for

me, but I am no more than a poor lieutenant still, d—n my blood."

Having vented this repetition of expletives, the lawyer owned he had not been requited according to his desert; observed, that the labourer is always worthy of his hire, and asked if the promise was made before witnesses, because in that case the law would compel the general to perform it; — but understanding that the promise was made over a bottle, without being restricted to time or terms, he pronounced it not valid in law, proceeded to inquire into the particulars of the battle, and affirmed, that although the English had drawn themselves into a premunire at first, the French managed their cause so lamely in the course of the dispute, that they would have been utterly nonsuited, had they not obtained a *noli prosequi*. In spite of these enlivening touches, the conversation was likely to suffer another long interruption; when the lieutenant, unwilling to conceal any of his accomplishments that could be displayed in his present situation, offered to regale the company with a song; and, interpreting our silence into a desire of hearing, began to warble a fashionable air, the first stanza of which he pronounced thus:

Would you task the moon-ty'd hair,
To yon flagrant beau repair;
Where waving with the popling vow,
The bantling fine will shelter you, etc.

The sense of the rest he perverted as he went on, with such surprising facility, that I could not help thinking he had been at some pains to burlesque the performance. Miss Snapper ascribed it to the true

cause, namely ignorance: and when he asked her how she relished his music, answered, that, in her opinion, the music and the words were much of a piece. "O d—n my blood!" said he, "I take that as a high compliment; for everybody allows the words are d—nable fine." "They may be so," replied the lady, "for aught I know, but they are above my comprehension." "I am't obliged to find you comprehension, madam, curse me!" cried he. "No, nor to speak sense neither," said she. "D—n my heart," said he, "I'll speak what I please." Here the lawyer interposed, by telling him there were some things he must not speak. And, upon being defied to give an instance, mentioned treason and defamation. "As for the King," cried the soldier, "God bless him — I eat his bread, and have lost blood in his cause, therefore I have nothing to say to him — but, by G—d, I dare say anything to any other man." "No," said the lawyer, "you dare not call me a rogue." "D—me, for what?" said the other. "Because," replied the counsellor, "I should have a good action against you, and recover." "Well, well," cried the officer, "if I dare not call you a rogue, I dare think you one, d—me." This stroke of wit he accompanied with a loud laugh of self-approbation, which unluckily did not affect the audience, but effectually silenced his antagonist, who did not open his mouth for the space of an hour, except to clear his pipe with three *hems*, which, however, produced nothing.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

DAY BREAKING, I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF VIEWING THE PERSON OF MISS SNAPPER, WHOM I HAD NOT SEEN BEFORE — THE SOLDIER IS WITTY UPON ME — IS OFFENDED — TALKS MUCH OF HIS VALOUR — IS REPRIMANDED BY A GRAVE GENTLEWOMAN — WE ARE ALARMED WITH THE CRY OF HIGHWAYMEN — I GET OUT OF THE COACH, AND STAND IN MY OWN DEFENCE — THEY RIDE OFF WITHOUT HAVING ATTACKED US — I PURSUE THEM — ONE OF THEM IS THROWN FROM HIS HORSE AND TAKEN — I RETURN TO THE COACH — AM COMPLIMENTED BY MISS SNAPPER — THE CAPTAIN'S BEHAVIOUR ON THIS OCCASION — THE PRUDE REPROACHES ME IN A SOLILOQUY — I UPBRAID HER IN THE SAME MANNER — THE BEHAVIOUR OF MRS. SNAPPER AT BREAKFAST DISOBLIGES ME — THE LAWYER IS WITTY UPON THE OFFICER, WHO THREATENS HIM.

IN the meantime, day breaking in upon us, discovered to one another the faces of their fellow-travellers, and I had the good fortune to find my mistress not quite so deformed nor disagreeable as she had been represented to me. Her head, indeed, bore some resemblance to a hatchet, the edge being represented by her face; but she had a certain delicacy in her complexion, and a great deal of vivacity in her eyes, which were very large and black; and though the protuberance of her breast,

when considered alone, seemed to drag her forwards, it was easy to perceive an equivalent on her back which balanced the other, and kept her body in equilibrio. On the whole, I thought I should have great reason to congratulate myself, if it should be my fate to possess twenty thousand pounds encumbered with such a wife. I began therefore to deliberate about the most probable means of acquiring the conquest, and was so much engrossed by this idea, that I scarce took any notice of the rest of the people in the coach, but revolved my project in silence; while the conversation was maintained as before, by the object of my hopes, the son of Mars, and the barrister, who by this time had recollected himself, and talked in terms as much as ever.

At length a dispute happened, which ended in a wager, to be determined by me, who was so much absorbed in contemplation, that I neither heard the reference nor the question, which was put to me by each in his turn; affronted at my supposed contempt, the soldier, with great vociferation, swore, I was either dumb or deaf, if not both, and that I looked as if I could not say Boh to a goose. Aroused at this observation, I fixed my eyes upon him, and pronounced with emphasis the interjection *Boh!* Upon which he cocked his hat in a fierce manner, and cried, "D—me, sir, what d'ye mean by that?" Had I intended to answer him, which by the bye was not my design, I should have been anticipated by Miss, who told him, my meaning was to show that I could cry Boh to a goose; and laughed very heartily at my laconic reproof. Her explanation and mirth did not

help to appease his wrath, which broke out in several martial insinuations, such as — "I do not understand such freedoms, d—me! D—n my blood! I'm a gentleman, and bear the King's commission. 'Sblood! some people deserve to have their noses pulled for their impertinence." I thought to have checked these ejaculations by a frown; because he had talked so much of his valour, that I had long ago rated him as an ass in a lion's skin; but this expedient did not answer my expectation; he took umbrage at the contraction of my brows, swore he did not value my sulky looks a fig's end, and protested he feared no man breathing. Miss Snapper said she was very glad to find herself in company with a man of so much courage, who, she did not doubt, would protect us from all attempts of highwaymen during our journey. "Make yourself perfectly easy on that head, madam," replied the officer; "I have got a pair of pistols (here they are) which I took from a horse officer at the battle of Dettingen — they are double loaded, and if any highwayman in England robs you of the value of a pin, while I have the honour of being in your company, d—n my heart."

When he had expressed himself in this manner, a prim gentlewoman, who had sat silent hitherto, opened her mouth, and said, she wondered how any man could be so rude as to pull out such weapons before ladies. "D—me, madam," cried the champion, "if you are so much afraid at sight of a pistol, how d'ye propose to stand fire if there should be occasion?" She then told him, that if she thought he could be so unmannerly as to use firearms in her

presence, whatever might be the occasion, she would get out of the coach immediately, and walk to the next village, where she might procure a convenience to herself. Before he could make any answer, my Dulcinea interposed, and observed, that, far from being offended at a gentleman's using his arms in his own defence, she thought herself very lucky in being along with one by whose valour she stood a good chance of saving herself from being rifled. The prude cast a disdainful look at Miss, and said, that people who have but little to lose are sometimes the most solicitous about preserving it. The old lady was affronted at this innuendo, and took notice, that people ought to be very well informed before they spoke slightingly of other people's fortunes, lest they discover their own envy, and make themselves ridiculous. The daughter declared, that she did not pretend to vie with anybody in point of riches; and, if the lady who insisted upon non-resistance would promise to indemnify us for all the loss we should sustain, she would be one of the first to persuade the captain to submission, in case we should be attacked. To this proposal, reasonable as it was, the reserved lady made no other reply, than a scornful glance and a toss of her head.

I was very well pleased with the spirit of my mistress; and even wished for an opportunity of distinguishing my courage under her eye, which I believed could not fail of prepossessing her in my favour; when, all of a sudden, Strap rode up to the coach door, and told us in a great fright, that two men on horseback were crossing the heath (for by this time

we had passed Hounslow), and made directly towards us. This piece of information was no sooner delivered than Mrs. Snapper began to scream, her daughter grew pale, the other lady pulled out her purse to be in readiness, the lawyer's teeth chattered, while he pronounced, "'T is no matter — we 'll sue the county, and recover." The captain gave evident signs of confusion; and I, after having commanded the coachman to stop, opened the door, jumped out, and invited the warrior to follow me. But, finding him backward and astonished, I took his pistols, and, giving them to Strap, who had by this time alighted, and trembled very much, I mounted on horseback, and, taking my own, which I could better depend upon, from the holsters, cocked them both, and faced the robbers, who were now very near us. Seeing me ready to oppose them on horseback, and another man armed a-foot, they made a halt at some distance to reconnoitre us, and, after having rode round us twice, myself still facing about as they rode, went off the same way as they came, at a hand-gallop. A gentleman's servant coming up with a horse at the same time, I offered him a crown to assist me in pursuing them: which he no sooner accepted, than I armed him with the officer's pistols, and we galloped after the thieves, who, trusting to the swiftness of their horses, stopped till we came within shot of them, and then firing at us, put their nags to the full speed. We followed them as fast as our beasts could carry us; but not being so well mounted as they, our efforts would have been to little purpose, had not the horse of one of them stumbled, and thrown his rider with such violence

over his head, that he lay senseless when we came up, and was taken without the least opposition; while his comrade consulted his own safety in flight, without regarding the distress of his friend. We scarce had time to make ourselves masters of his arms, and tie his hands together, before he recovered his senses, when, learning his situation, he affected surprise, demanded to know by what authority we used a gentleman in that manner, and had the impudence to threaten us with a prosecution for robbery. In the meantime, we perceived Strap coming up with a crowd of people, armed with different kinds of weapons; and among the rest a farmer, who no sooner perceived the thief, whom we had secured, than he cried with great emotion, "There's the fellow who robbed me an hour ago of twenty pounds in a canvas bag." He was immediately searched, and the money found exactly as it had been described. Upon which we committed him to the charge of the countryman, who carried him to the town of Hounslow, which it seems the farmer had alarmed; and I, having satisfied the footman for his trouble, according to promise, returned with Strap to the coach, where I found the captain and lawyer busy in administering smelling bottles and cordials to the grave lady, who had gone into a fit at the noise of the firing.

When I had taken my seat, Miss Snapper, who from the coach had seen everything that happened, made me a compliment on my behaviour, and said, she was glad to see me returned, without having received any injury: her mother too owned herself obliged to my resolution; and the lawyer told me,

that I was entitled by act of parliament to a reward of forty pounds, for having apprehended a highwayman. The soldier observed, with a countenance in which impudence and shame struggling produced some disorder, that if I had not been in such a d—d hurry to get out of the coach, he would have secured the rogues effectually, without all this bustle and loss of time, by a scheme which my heat and precipitation ruined. "For my own part," continued he, "I am always extremely cool on these occasions." "So it appeared, by your trembling," said the young lady. "Death and d—tion," cried he, "your sex protects you, madam; if any man on earth durst tell me so much, I'd send him to hell, d—n my heart! in an instant." So saying, he fixed his eyes upon me, and asked if I had seen him tremble? I answered without hesitation, "Yes." "D—n me, sir," said he, "d'ye doubt my courage?" I replied, "Very much." This declaration quite disconcerted him. He looked blank, and pronounced with a faltering voice, "O! 't is very well — d—n my blood! I shall find a time." I signified my contempt of him, by thrusting my tongue in my cheek, which humbled him so much, that he scarce swore another oath aloud during the whole journey.

The precise lady, having recruited her spirits by the help of some strong waters, began a soliloquy, in which she wondered that any man, who pretended to maintain the character of a gentleman, could, for the sake of a little paltry coin, throw persons of honour into such quandaries as might endanger their lives; and professed her surprise, that women

were not ashamed to commend such brutality; at the same time vowing, that for the future she would never set foot in a stage-coach, if a private convenience could be had for love or money.

Nettled at her remarks, I took the same method of conveying my sentiments, and wondered in my turn that any woman of common sense should be so unreasonable as to expect that people who had neither acquaintance or connexion with her, would tamely allow themselves to be robbed and maltreated, merely to indulge her capricious humour. I likewise confessed my astonishment at her insolence and ingratitude in taxing a person with brutality, who deserved her approbation and acknowledgment; and vowed, that if ever she should be assaulted again, I would leave her to the mercy of the spoiler, that she might know the value of my protection.

This person of honour did not think fit to carry on the altercation any farther, but seemed to chew the cud of her resentment, with the crest-fallen captain, while I entered into discourse with my charmer, who was the more pleased with my conversation, as she had conceived a very indifferent opinion of my intellects from my former silence. I should have had cause to be equally satisfied with the sprightliness of her genius, could she have curbed her imagination with judgment; but she laboured under such a profusion of talk, that I dreaded her unruly tongue, and felt by anticipation the horrors of an eternal clack! However, when I considered, on the other hand, the joys attending the possession of

twenty thousand pounds, I forgot her imperfections, seized occasion by the forelock, and endeavoured to insinuate myself into her affection. The careful mother kept a strict watch over her, and, though she could not help behaving civilly to me, took frequent opportunities of discouraging our communication, by reprimanding her for being so free with strangers, and telling her she must learn to speak less, and think more. Abridged of the use of speech, we conversed with our eyes, and I found the young lady very eloquent in this kind of discourse. In short, I had reason to believe that she was sick of the old gentlewoman's tuition, and that I should find it no difficult matter to supersede her authority.

When we arrived at the place where we were to breakfast, I alighted, and helped my mistress out of the coach, as well as her mother, who called for a private room, to which they withdrew, in order to eat by themselves. As they retired together, I perceived that Miss had got more twists from nature, than I had before observed, for she was bent sideways in the figure like an S, so that her progression very much resembled that of a crab. The prude also chose the captain for her messmate, and ordered breakfast for two only to be brought into another separate room; while the lawyer and I, deserted by the rest of the company, were fain to put up with each other. I was a good deal chagrined at the stately reserve of Mrs. Snapper, who I thought did not use me with all the complaisance I deserved; and my companion declared, that he had been a traveller for twenty years, and never knew the

stage-coach rules so much infringed before. As for the honourable gentlewoman, I could not conceive the meaning of her attachment to the lieutenant; and asked the lawyer if he knew for which of the soldier's virtues she admired him? The counsellor facetiously replied, "I suppose the lady knows him to be an able conveyancer, and wants him to make a settlement in tail." I could not help laughing at the archness of the barrister, who entertained me during breakfast with a great deal of wit of the same kind, at the expense of our fellow-travellers; and among other things said, he was sorry to find the young lady saddled with such encumbrances.

When we had made an end of our repast, and paid our reckoning, we went into the coach, took our places, and bribed the driver with sixpence, to revenge us on the rest of his fare, by hurrying them away in the midst of their meal. This task he performed to our satisfaction, after he had disturbed their enjoyment with his importunate clamour. The mother and daughter obeyed the summons first, and coming to the coach door, were obliged to desire the coachman's assistance to get in, because the lawyer and I had agreed to show our resentment by our neglect. They were no sooner seated, than the captain appeared, as much heated as if he had been pursued a dozen miles by an enemy; and immediately after him came the lady, not without some marks of disorder. Having helped her up, he entered himself, growling a few oaths against the coachman, for his impertinent interruption; and the lawyer comforted him by saying, that if he had suffered a *nisi prius* through the

obstinacy of the defendant, he might have an opportunity to join issue at the next stage. This last expression gave offence to the grave gentlewoman, who told him, if she was a man, she would make him repent of such obscenity, and thanked God she had never been in such company before. At this insinuation, the captain thought himself under a necessity of espousing the lady's cause; and accordingly threatened to cut off the lawyer's ears, if he should give his tongue any such liberties for the future. The poor counsellor begged pardon, and universal silence ensued.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

I RESOLVE TO INGRATIATE MYSELF WITH THE MOTHER, AND AM FAVOURED BY ACCIDENT — THE PRECISE LADY FINDS HER HUSBAND, AND QUITS THE COACH — THE CAPTAIN IS DISAPPOINTED OF HIS DINNER — WE ARRIVE AT BATH — I ACCOMPANY MISS SNAPPER TO THE LONG ROOM, WHERE SHE IS ATTACKED BY BEAU NASH, AND TURNS THE LAUGH AGAINST HIM — I MAKE LOVE TO HER, AND RECEIVE A CHECK — SQUIRE HER TO AN ASSEMBLY, WHERE I AM BLESSED WITH A SIGHT OF MY DEAR NARCISSA, WHICH DISCOMPOSES ME SO MUCH, THAT MISS SNAPPER, OBSERVING MY DISORDER, IS AT PAINS TO DISCOVER THE CAUSE — IS PIQUED AT THE OCCASION, AND, IN OUR WAY HOME, PAYS ME A SARCASTIC COMPLIMENT — I AM MET BY MISS WILLIAMS, WHO IS MAID AND CONFIDANT OF NARCISSA — SHE ACQUAINTS ME WITH HER LADY'S REGARD FOR ME WHILE UNDER THE DISGUISE OF A SERVANT, AND DESCRIBES THE TRANSPORTS OF NARCISSA ON SEEING ME AT THE ASSEMBLY IN THE CHARACTER OF A GENTLEMAN — I AM SURPRISED WITH AN ACCOUNT OF HER AUNT'S MARRIAGE, AND MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO MEET MISS WILLIAMS NEXT DAY.

DURING this unsocial interval, my pride and interest maintained a severe conflict on the subject of Miss Snapper, whom the one represented as unworthy of notice, and the other proposed as the object of my whole attention: the advantages and disadvantages

attending such a match were opposed to one another by my imagination; and at length my judgment gave it so much in favour of the first, that I resolved to prosecute my scheme with all the address in my power. I thought I perceived some concern in her countenance, occasioned by my silence, which she, no doubt, imputed to my disgust at her mother's behaviour; and as I believed the old woman could not fail of ascribing my muteness to the same motive, I determined to continue that sullen conduct towards her, and fall upon some other method of manifesting my esteem for the daughter: nor was it difficult for me to make her acquainted with my sentiments by the expression of my looks, which I modelled into the characters of humility and love; and which were answered by her with all the sympathy and approbation I could desire. But when I began to consider, that without further opportunities of improving my success, all the progress I had hitherto made would not much avail, and that such opportunities could not be enjoyed without the mother's permission; I concluded it would be requisite to vanquish her coldness and suspicion by my assiduities and respectful behaviour on the road; and she would in all likelihood invite me to visit her at Bath, where I did not fear of being able to cultivate her acquaintance as much as would be necessary to the accomplishment of my purpose. And indeed accident furnished me with an opportunity of obliging her so much, that she could not, with any appearance of good manners, forbear to gratify my inclination.

When we arrived at our dining-place, we found all

the eatables in the inn bespoke by a certain nobleman, who had got the start of us; and in all likelihood my mistress and her mother must have dined with Duke Humphrey, had I not exerted myself in their behalf, and bribed the landlord with a glass of wine, to curtail his lordship's entertainment of a couple of fowls and some bacon, which I sent with my compliments to the ladies. They accepted my treat with a great many thanks, and desired I would favour them with my company at dinner, where I amused the old gentlewoman so successfully, by maintaining a seemingly disinterested ease in the midst of my civility, that she signified a desire of being better acquainted, and hoped I would be so kind as to see her sometimes at Bath. While I enjoyed myself in this manner, the precise lady had the good fortune to meet with her husband, who was no other than gentleman, or, in other words, valet-de-chambre, to the very nobleman whose coach stood at the door. Proud of the interest she had in the house, she affected to show her power by introducing the captain to her spouse, as a person who had treated her with great civility; upon which he was invited to a share of their dinner; while the poor lawyer, finding himself utterly abandoned, made application to me, and was, through my intercession, admitted into our company. Having satisfied our appetites, and made ourselves merry at the expense of the person of honour, the civil captain, and complaisant husband, I did myself the pleasure of discharging the bill by stealth, for which I received a great many apologies and acknowledgments from my guests, and we

re-embarked at the first warning. The officer was obliged, at last, to appease his hunger with a luncheon of bread and cheese, and a pint bottle of brandy, which he dispatched in the coach, cursing the inappetence of his lordship, who had ordered dinner to be put back a whole hour.

Nothing remarkable happened during the remaining part of our journey, which was finished next day, when I waited on the ladies to the house of a relation, in which they intended to lodge; and, passing that night at the inn, took lodgings in the morning for myself.

The forenoon was spent in visiting everything that was worth seeing in the place, in company with a gentleman to whom Banter had given me a letter of introduction; and in the afternoon I waited on the ladies, and found Miss a good deal indisposed with the fatigue of the journey. As they foresaw they should have occasion for a male acquaintance to squire them at all public places, I was received with great cordiality, and had the mother's commission to conduct them next day to the Long Room, which we no sooner entered, than the eyes of everybody present were turned upon us; and when we had suffered the martyrdom of their looks for some time, a whisper circulated at our expense, which was accompanied with many contemptuous smiles and tittering observations, to my utter shame and confusion. I did not so much conduct as follow my charge to a place where she seated her mother and herself with astonishing composure, notwithstanding the unmannerly behaviour of the whole company, which seemed

to be assumed merely to put her out of countenance. The celebrated Mr. Nash, who commonly attends in this place, as master of the ceremonies, perceiving the disposition of the assembly, took upon himself the task of gratifying their ill-nature still further, by exposing my mistress to the edge of his wit. With this view he approached us, with many bows and grimaces, and, after having welcomed Miss Snapper to the place, asked her, in the hearing of all present, if she could inform him the name of Tobit's dog. I was so much incensed at his insolence that I should certainly have kicked him where he stood, without ceremony, had not the young lady prevented the effects of my indignation, by replying, with the utmost vivacity, "His name was Nash, and an impudent dog he was."

This repartee, so unexpected and just, raised such an universal laugh at the aggressor, that all his assurance was insufficient to support him under their derision; so that, after he had endeavoured to compose himself, by taking snuff, and forcing a smile, he was obliged to sneak off in a very ludicrous attitude; while my Dulcinea was applauded to the skies, for the brilliancy of her wit, and her acquaintance immediately courted by the best people of both sexes in the room. This event, with which I was infinitely pleased at first, did not fail of alarming me, upon further reflection, when I considered, that the more she was caressed by persons of distinction, the more her pride would be inflamed, and, consequently, the obstacles to my success multiplied and enlarged. Nor were my presaging fears untrue.

MAKES LOVE TO MISS SNAPPER

That very night I perceived her a little intoxicated with the incense she had received; and, though she still behaved with a particular civility to me, I foresaw, that, as soon as her fortune should be known, she would be surrounded with a swarm of admirers, some one of whom might possibly, by excelling me in point of wealth, or in the arts of flattery and scandal, supplant me in her esteem, and find means to make the mother of his party. I resolved therefore to lose no time, and, being invited to spend the evening with them, found an opportunity, in spite of the old gentlewoman's vigilance, to explain the meaning of my glances in the coach, by paying homage to her wit, and professing myself enamoured of her person. She blushed at my declaration, and in a favourable manner disapproved of the liberty I had taken, putting me in mind of our being strangers to each other, and desiring I would not be the means of interrupting our acquaintance by any such unseasonable strokes of gallantry for the future. My ardour was effectually checked by this reprimand, which was, however, delivered in such a gentle manner that I had no cause to be disobliged; and the arrival of her mother relieved me from a dilemma, in which I should not have known how to demean myself a minute longer. Neither could I resume the easiness of carriage with which I came in. My mistress acted on the reserve, and the conversation beginning to flag, the old lady introduced her kinswoman of the house, and proposed a hand at whist.

While we amused ourselves at this diversion, I

understood from the gentlewoman, that there was to be an assembly next night, at which I begged to have the honour of dancing with Miss. She thanked me for the favour I intended her, assured me she never did dance, but signified a desire of seeing the company; when I offered my service, which was accepted; not a little proud of being exempted from appearing with her, in a situation, that, notwithstanding my profession to the contrary, was not at all agreeable to my inclination.

Having supped, and continued the game, till such time as the successive yawns of the mother warned me to be gone, I took my leave, and went home, where I made Strap very happy with an account of my progress. Next day I put on my gayest apparel, and went to drink tea at Mrs. Snapper's according to appointment, when I found, to my inexpressible satisfaction, that she was laid up with the toothache, and that Miss was to be intrusted to my care. Accordingly, we set out for the ball-room pretty early in the evening, and took possession of a commodious place, where we had not sat longer than a quarter of an hour, when a gentleman dressed in a green frock came in, leading a young lady, whom I immediately discovered to be the adorable Narcissa! Good Heaven! what were the thrillings of my soul at that instant! my reflection was overwhelmed with a torrent of agitation! my heart throbbed with surprising violence! a sudden mist overspread my eyes! my ears were invaded with a dreadful sound! I paused for want of breath, and, in short, was for some moments entranced! This first tumult sub-

siding, a crowd of flattering ideas rushed upon my imagination. Everything that was soft, sensible, and engaging in the character of that dear creature, recurred to my remembrance, and every favourable circumstance of my own qualifications appeared in all the aggravation of self-conceit, to heighten my expectation! Neither was this transport of long duration. The dread of her being already disposed of intervened, and overcast my enchanting reverie! My presaging apprehension represented her encircled in the arms of some happy rival, and of consequence for ever lost to me! I was stung with this suggestion, and, believing the person who conducted her to be the husband of this amiable young lady, already devoted him to my fury, and stood up to mark him for my vengeance; when I recollected, to my unspeakable joy, her brother, the fox-hunter, in the person of her gallant.

Undeceived so much to my satisfaction in this particular, I gazed, in a frenzy of delight, on the irresistible charms of his sister, who no sooner distinguished me in the crowd, than her evident confusion afforded a happy omen to my flame. At sight of me she start[l]ed, the roses instantly vanished from her polished cheeks, and returned in a moment with a double glow that overspread her lovely neck, while her enchanting bosom heaved with strong emotion. I hailed these favourable symptoms, and, lying in wait for her looks, did homage with my eyes. She seemed to approve my declaration, by the complacency of her aspect; and I was so transported with her discovery, that more than once I

was on the point of making up to her to disclose the throbbings of my heart in person, had not that profound veneration which her presence always inspired, restrained the unseasonable impulse. All my powers being engrossed in this manner, it may easily be imagined how ill I entertained Miss Snapper, on whom I could not now turn my eyes without making comparisons very little to her advantage. It was not even in my power to return distinct answers to the questions she asked from time to time, so that she could not help observing my absence of mind; and, having a turn for observation, watched my glances, and, tracing them to the divine object, discovered the cause of my disorder. That she might, however, be convinced of the truth of her conjecture, she began to interrogate me with regard to Narcissa, and, notwithstanding all my endeavours to disguise my sentiments, perceived my attachment by my confusion. Upon which she assumed a stateliness of behaviour, and sat silent during the remaining part of the entertainment.

At any other time, her suspicion would have alarmed me; but now I was elevated by my passion above every other consideration. The mistress of my soul having retired with her brother, I discovered so much uneasiness at my situation, that Miss Snapper proposed to go home, and while I conducted her to a chair, told me she had too great a regard for me to keep me any longer in torment. I feigned ignorance of her meaning, and having seen her safely at her lodgings, took my leave, and went home in an ecstasy, where I disclosed everything that had happened to

my confidant and humble servant Strap, who did not relish the accident so well as I expected, and observed that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. "But, however," said he, "you know best,—you know best." Next day, as I went to the Pump Room, in hopes of seeing or hearing some tidings of my fair enslaver, I was met by a gentlewoman, who, having looked hard at me, cried, "O C—t! Mr. Random!" Surprised at this exclamation, I examined the countenance of the person who spoke, and immediately recognised my old sweetheart and fellow-sufferer, Miss Williams.

I was mightily pleased to find this unfortunate woman under such a decent appearance, professed my joy at seeing her so well, and desired to know where I should have the pleasure of her conversation. She was as heartily rejoiced at the apparent easiness of my fortune, and gave me to know, that she, as yet, had no habitation that she could properly call her own, but would wait on me at any place I should please to appoint. Understanding that she was unengaged for the present, I showed her the way to my own lodgings, where, after a very affectionate salutation, she informed me of her being very happy in the service of a young lady to whom she was recommended by a former mistress deceased, into whose family she had recommended herself by the honest deceit she had concerted while she lived with me in the garret at London. She then expressed a vehement desire to be acquainted with the vicissitudes of my life since we parted, and excused her curiosity on account of the concern she had for my interest. I forthwith grati-

fied her request, and when I described my situation in Sussex, perceived her to attend to my story with particular eagerness. She interrupted me when I had finished that period with, "Good God! is it possible?" — and then begged I would be so good as to continue my relation; which I did as briefly as I could, burning with impatience to know the cause of her surprise, about which I had already formed a very interesting conjecture.

When I had brought my adventures down to the present day, she seemed very much affected with the different circumstances of my fortune; and saying with a smile, she believed my distresses were now at a period, proceeded to inform me, that the lady whom she served, was no other than the charming Narcissa, who had honoured her with her confidence for some time; in consequence of which trust, she had often repeated the story of John Brown, with great admiration and regard; that she loved to dwell upon the particulars of his character, and did not scruple to own a tender approbation of his flame. I became delirious at this piece of intelligence, strained Miss Williams in my embrace, called her the angel of my happiness, and acted such extravagances, that she might have been convinced of my sincerity, had she not been satisfied of my honour before. As soon as I was in condition to yield attention, she described the present situation of her mistress, who had no sooner reached her lodgings the night before, than she closeted her, and, in a rapture of joy, gave her to know that she had seen me at the ball, where I appeared in the character which she always thought

my due, with such advantage of transformation, that unless my image had been engraven on her heart, it would have been impossible to know me for the person who had worn her aunt's livery; that, by the language of my eyes, she was assured of the continuance of my passion for her, and consequently of my being unengaged to any other; and that, though she did not doubt I would speedily fall upon some method of being introduced, she was so impatient to hear of me, that she (Miss Williams) had been sent abroad this very morning, on purpose to learn the name and character I at present bore.

My bosom had been hitherto a stranger to such a flood of joy as now rushed upon it. My faculties were overborne by the tide. It was some time before I could open my mouth, and much longer ere I could utter a coherent sentence. At length, I fervently requested her to lead me immediately to the object of my adoration. But she resisted my importunity, and explained the danger of such premature conduct. "How favourable soever," said she, "my lady's inclination towards you may be, you may depend upon it, she will not commit the smallest trespass on decorum, either in disclosing her own, or in receiving a declaration of your passion; and although the great veneration I have for you has prompted me to reveal what she communicated to me in confidence, I know so well the severity of her sentiments with respect to the punctilios of her sex, that, if she could learn the least surmise of it, she would not only dismiss me as a wretch unworthy of her benevolence, but also for ever shun the efforts of

your love." I assented to the justness of her remonstrance, and desired she would assist me with her advice and direction. Upon which, it was concerted between us, that, for the present, I should be contented with her telling Narcissa, that, in the course of her inquiries, she could only learn my name; and that if, in a day or two, I could fall upon no other method of being introduced to her mistress, she would deliver a letter from me on pretence of consulting her happiness; and say that I met her in the streets, and bribed her to this piece of service. Matters being thus adjusted, I kept my old acquaintance to breakfast, and learned, from her conversation, that my rival Sir Timothy had drunk himself into an apoplexy, of which he died five months ago; that the savage was still unmarried; and that his aunt had been seized with a whim which he little expected, and chosen the schoolmaster of the parish for her lord and husband; but matrimony not agreeing with her constitution, she had been hectic and dropsical a good while, and was now at Bath, in order to drink the waters for the recovery of her health; that her niece had accompanied her thither at her request, and attended her with the same affection as before, notwithstanding the mistake she had committed; and that her nephew, who had been exasperated at the loss of her fortune, did not give his attendance out of goodwill, but purely to have an eye on his sister, lest she should likewise throw herself away, without his consent or approbation. Having enjoyed ourselves in this manner, and made an assignation to meet next day at a certain place, Miss

STRAP IS ASTONISHED

Williams took her leave; and Strap's looks being very inquisitive about the nature of the communication subsisting between us, I made him acquainted with the whole affair, to his great astonishment and satisfaction.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

I BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH NARCISSA'S BROTHER, WHO INVITES ME TO HIS HOUSE, WHERE I AM INTRODUCED TO THAT ADORABLE CREATURE — AFTER DINNER, THE SQUIRE RETIRES TO TAKE HIS NAP — FREEMAN, GUESSING THE SITUATION OF MY THOUGHTS, WITHDRAWS LIKEWISE ON PRETENCE OF BUSINESS — I DECLARE MY PASSION TO NARCISSA — AM WELL RECEIVED — CHARMED WITH HER CONVERSATION — THE SQUIRE DETAINS US TO SUPPER — I ELUDE HIS DESIGN BY A STRATAGEM, AND GET HOME SOBER.

IN the afternoon I drank tea at the house of Mr. Freeman, to whom I had been recommended by Banter; where I had not sat five minutes till the fox-hunter came in, and by his familiar behaviour appeared to be intimate with my friend. I was at first under some concern, lest he should recollect my features; but when I found myself introduced to him as a gentleman from London, without being discovered, I blessed the opportunity that brought me into his company, hoping that, in the course of our acquaintance, he would invite me to his house. Nor were my hopes frustrated; for, as we spent the evening together, he grew extremely fond of my conversation, asked a

great many childish questions about France and foreign parts; and seemed so highly entertained with my answers, that, in his cups, he shook me often by the hand, pronounced me an honest fellow, and, in fine, desired our company at dinner next day in his own house.

My imagination was so much employed in anticipating the happiness I was to enjoy next day, that I slept very little that night; but, rising early in the morning, went to the place appointed, where I met my she-friend, and imparted to her my success with the squire. She was very much pleased at the occasion, which, she said, could not fail of being agreeable to Narcissa, who, in spite of her passion for me, had mentioned some scruples relating to my true situation and character, which the delicacy of her sentiments suggested, and which she believed I would find it necessary to remove, though she did not know how. I was a good deal startled at this insinuation, because I foresaw the difficulty I should find in barely doing myself justice; for, although it never was my intention to impose myself upon any woman, much less on Narcissa, as a man of fortune, I laid claim to the character of a gentleman, by birth, education, and behaviour; and yet, so unlucky had the circumstances of my life fallen out, I should find it a very hard matter to make good my pretensions even to these, especially to the last, which was the most essential. Miss Williams was as sensible as I of this my disadvantage, but comforted me with observing, that when once a woman had bestowed her affections on

a man, she cannot help judging of him in all respects with a partiality easily influenced in his favour. She remarked, that although some situations of my life had been low, yet none of them had been infamous; that my indigence had been the crime not of me, but of fortune; and that the miseries I had undergone, by improving the faculties both of mind and body, qualified me the more for my dignified station, and would of consequence recommend me to the good graces of any sensible woman. She, therefore, advised me to be always open and unreserved to the inquiries of my mistress, without unnecessarily betraying the meanest occurrences of my fate, and trust to the strength of her love and reflection for the rest. The sentiments of this sensible young woman, on this as well as on almost every other subject, perfectly agreed with mine; I thanked her for the care she took of my interests, and promising to behave myself according to her direction, we parted, after she had assured me that I might depend upon her best offices with her mistress, and that she would from time to time communicate to me such intelligence as she should procure relating to my flame.

Having dressed myself to the best advantage, I waited for the time of dinner with the most fearful impatience; and, as the hour drew nigh, my heart beat with such increased velocity, and my spirits contracted such disorder, that I began to suspect my resolution, and even to wish myself disengaged. At last Mr. Freeman called at my lodgings, in his way, and I accompanied him to the house where all

my happiness was deposited. We were very kindly received by the squire, who sat smoking his pipe in a parlour, and asked if we chose to drink anything before dinner. Though I never had more occasion for a cordial, I was ashamed to accept his offer, which was also refused by my friend. We sat down, however, and entered into conversation, which lasted half an hour, so that I had time to recollect myself; and, so capricious were my thoughts, even to hope that Narcissa would not appear — when all of a sudden, a servant coming in, gave us notice that dinner was upon the table — and my perturbation returned with such violence, that I could scarce conceal it from the company as I ascended the staircase. When I entered the dining-room, the first object that saluted my ravished eyes was the divine Narcissa, blushing like Aurora, adorned with all the graces that meekness, innocence, and beauty can diffuse! I was seized with a giddiness, my knees tottered, and I scarce had strength enough to perform the ceremony of salutation, when her brother, slapping me on the shoulder, cried, "Measter Randan, that there is my sister." I approached her with eagerness and fear; but in the moment of our embrace, my soul was agonised with rapture!

It was a lucky circumstance for us both, that my entertainer was not endued with an uncommon stock of penetration; for our mutual confusion was so manifest, that Mr. Freeman perceived it, and as we went home together, congratulated me on my good fortune. But so far was Bruin from entertaining the least suspicion, that he encouraged me to begin

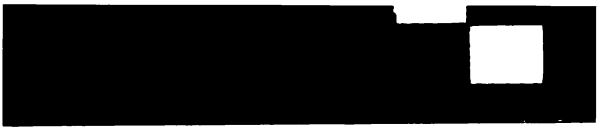
a conversation with my mistress in a language unknown to him, by telling her, that he had brought a gentleman who could jabber with her in French and other foreign lingos, as fast as she pleased; then turning to me, said, "Odds bobs! I wish you would hold discourse with her in your French or Italiano, and tell me if she understands it as well as she would be thought to do — there's her aunt and she will chatter together whole days in it, and I can't have a mouthful of English for love or money." I consulted the look of my amiable mistress, and found her averse to his proposal, which she declined with a sweetness of denial peculiar to herself, as a piece of disrespect to that part of the company which did not understand the language in question. As I had the happiness of sitting opposite to her, I feasted my eyes much more than my palate, which she tempted in vain with the most delicious bits carved by her fair hand, and recommended by her persuasive tongue; but all my other appetites were swallowed up in the immensity of my love, which I fed by gazing incessantly on the delightful object. Dinner was scarce ended, when the squire became very drowsy, and, after several dreadful yawns, got up, stretched himself, took two or three turns across the room, begged we would allow him to take a short nap, and having laid a strong injunction on his sister to detain us till his return, went to his repose without further ceremony.

He had not been gone many minutes, when Freeman, guessing the situation of my heart, and thinking he could not do me a greater favour than to leave me

alone with Narcissa, pretended to recollect himself all of a sudden, and, starting up, begged the lady's pardon for half an hour, for he had luckily remembered an engagement of some consequence, that he must perform at that instant; so saying, he took his leave, promising to come back time enough for tea, leaving my mistress and me in great confusion. Now that I enjoyed an opportunity of disclosing the pantings of my soul, I had not power to use it. I studied many pathetic declarations, but when I attempted to give them utterance, my tongue denied its office; and she sat silent, with a downcast look, full of anxious alarm, her bosom heaving with expectation of some great event. At length I endeavoured to put an end to this solemn pause, and began with, "It is very surprising, madam,"—Here the sound dying away, I made a full stop—while Narcissa starting, blushed, and, with a timid accent, answered, "Sir?" Confounded at this note of interrogation, I pronounced, with the most sheepish bashfulness, "Madam!" To which she replied, "I beg pardon—I thought you had spoke to me." Another pause ensued—I made another effort; and though my voice faltered very much at the beginning, made shift to express myself in this manner: "I say, madam, 't is very surprising that love should act so inconsistent with itself, as to deprive its votaries of the use of their faculties when they have most need of them. Since the happy occasion of being alone with you presented itself, I have made many unsuccessful attempts to declare a passion for the loveliest of your sex—a passion which took possession of my soul, while my cruel fate com-

pelled me to wear a servile disguise so unsuitable to my birth, sentiments, and, let me add, my deserts; yet favourable in one respect, as it furnished me with opportunities of seeing and adoring your perfections. Yes, madam, it was then your dear idea entered my bosom, where it has lived unimpaired in the midst of numberless cares, and animated me against a thousand dangers and calamities."

While I spoke thus, she concealed her face with her fan, and, when I ceased speaking, recovering herself from the most beautiful confusion, told me, she thought herself very much obliged by my favourable opinion of her, and that she was very sorry to hear I had been unfortunate. Encouraged by this gentle reply, I proceeded, owned myself sufficiently recompensed by her kind compassion for what I had undergone, and declared that the future happiness of my life depended solely upon her. "Sir," said she, "I should be very ungrateful, if, after the signal protection you once afforded me, I should refuse to contribute towards your happiness, in any reasonable condescension." Transported at this acknowledgment, I threw myself at her feet, and begged she would regard my passion with a favourable eye. She was alarmed at my behaviour, entreated me to rise, lest her brother should discover me in that posture, and to spare her, for the present, upon a subject for which she was altogether unprepared. In consequence of this remonstrance, I rose, assuring her I would rather die than disobey her; but in the meantime begged her to consider how precious the minutes of this opportunity were, and what restraint I put upon



my inclinations in sacrificing them to her desire. She smiled with unspeakable sweetness, and said there would be no want of opportunities, provided I could maintain the good opinion her brother had conceived of me; and I, enchanted by her charms, seized her hand, which I well-nigh devoured with kisses. But she checked my boldness with a severity of countenance, and desired I would not so far forget myself to her as to endanger the esteem she had for me; she reminded me of our being almost strangers to each other, and of the necessity there was for her knowing me better before she could take any resolution in my favour; and, in short, mingled so much good sense and complacency in her reproof, that I became as much enamoured of her understanding, as I had been before of her beauty, and asked pardon for my presumption with the utmost reverence of conviction. She forgave my offence with her usual affability; and sealed my pardon with a look so full of bewitching tenderness, that for some minutes my senses were lost in ecstasy! I afterwards endeavoured to regulate my behaviour according to her desire, and turn the conversation upon a more indifferent subject. But her presence was an insurmountable obstacle to my design; while I beheld so much excellence, I found it impossible to call my attention from the contemplation of it! I gazed with unutterable fondness! I grew mad with admiration! "My condition is insupportable!" cried I, "I am distracted with passion! why are you so exquisitely fair? Why are you so enchantingly good? Why has Nature dignified you with charms so much above the standard of women?

and, wretch that I am, how dares my unworthiness aspire to the enjoyment of such perfection?"

She was startled at my ravings, reasoned down my transport, and by her irresistible eloquence soothed my soul into a state of tranquil felicity; but, lest I might suffer a relapse, industriously promoted other subjects to entertain my imagination. She chid me for having omitted to inquire about her aunt, who, she assured me, in the midst of all her absence of temper, and detachment from common affairs, often talked of me with uncommon warmth. I professed my veneration for the good lady, excused my omission, by imputing it to the violence of my love, which engrossed my whole soul, and desired to know the situation of her health. Upon which the amiable Narcissa repeated what I had heard before, of her marriage, with all the tenderness for her reputation that the subject would admit of; told me she lived with her husband hard by, and was so much afflicted with the dropsy, and wasted by a consumption, that she had small hopes of her recovery. Having expressed my sorrow for her distemper, I questioned her about my good friend Mrs. Sagely, who I learned, to my great satisfaction, was still in good health, and who had, by the encomiums she bestowed upon me after I was gone, confirmed the favourable impressions my behaviour at parting had made on Narcissa's heart. The circumstance introduced an inquiry into the conduct of Sir Timothy Thicket, who, she informed me, had found means to incense her brother so much against me, that she found it impossible to undeceive him; but, on the contrary, suffered very

much in her own character by his scandalous insinuations; that the whole parish was alarmed, and actually in pursuit of me, so that she had been in the utmost consternation upon my account, well knowing how little my own innocence, and her testimony, would have weighed with the ignorance, prejudice, and brutality of those who must have judged me, had I been apprehended. That Sir Timothy, having been seized with a fit of apoplexy, from which, with great difficulty, he was recovered, began to be apprehensive of death, and to prepare himself accordingly for that great event; as a step to which he sent for her brother, owned, with great contrition, the brutal design he had upon her, and, of consequence, acquitted me of the assault, robbery, and correspondence with her, which he laid to my charge; after which confession, he lived about a month in a languishing condition, and was carried off by a second assault.

Every word that this dear creature spoke, riveted the chains with which she held me enslaved. My mischievous fancy began to work, and the tempest of my passion to wake again, when the return of Freeman destroyed the tempting opportunity, and enabled me to quell the rising tumult. A little while after, the squire staggered into the room, rubbing his eyes, and called for his tea, which he drank out of a small bowl, qualified with brandy, while we took it in the usual way. Narcissa left us in order to visit her aunt; and when Freeman and I proposed to take our leave, the fox-hunter insisted on our spending the evening at his house with such obstinacy of affection,

that we were obliged to comply. For my own part, I should have been glad of the invitation, by which, in all likelihood, I should be blessed with more of his sister's company, had I not been afraid of risking her esteem, by entering into a debauch of drinking with him, which, from the knowledge of his character, I foresaw would happen; but there was no remedy. I was forced to rely upon the strength of my constitution, which I hoped would resist intoxication longer than the squire's, and to trust to the good-nature and discretion of my mistress for the rest.

Our entertainer, resolving to begin by times, ordered the table to be furnished with liquor and glasses immediately after tea; but we absolutely refused to set in for drinking so soon, and prevailed upon him to pass away an hour or two at whist, in which we engaged as soon as Narcissa returned. The savage and I happened to be partners at first; and as my thoughts were wholly employed in a more interesting game, I played so ill, that he lost all patience, swore bitterly, and threatened to call for wine if they would not grant him another associate. This desire was gratified, and Narcissa and I were of a side; he won, for the same reason that made him lose before. I was satisfied, my lovely partner did not repine, and the time slipped away very agreeably, until we were told that supper was served in another room.

The squire was enraged to find the evening so unprofitably spent, and wreaked his vengeance on the cards, which he tore, and committed to the flames with many execrations, threatening to make us

redeem our loss with a large glass, and quick circulation ; and, indeed, we had no sooner supped, and my charmer withdrawn, than he began to put his threats in execution. Three bottles of port (for he drank no other sort of wine) were placed before us, with as many water-glasses, which were immediately filled to the brim, after his example, by each, out of his respective allowance, and emptied in a trice, *to the best in Christendom.* Though I swallowed this and the next as fast as the glass could be replenished, without hesitation or show of reluctance, I perceived that my brain would not be able to bear many bumpers of this sort; and, dreading the perseverance of a champion who began with such vigour, I determined to make up for the deficiency of my strength by a stratagem, which I actually put in practice when the second course of bottles was called for. The wine being strong and heady, I was already a good deal discomposed by the dispatch we had made, Freeman's eyes began to reel, and Bruin himself was elevated into a song, which he uttered with great vociferation.

When I, therefore, saw the second round brought in, I assumed a gay air, entertained him with a French catch on the subject of drinking, which, though he did not understand it, delighted him highly, and, telling him that your choice spirits at Paris never troubled themselves with glasses, asked if he had not a bowl or cup in the house that would contain a whole quart of wine. "Odds niggers!" cried he, "I have a silver caudle cup that holds just the quantity, for all the world — fetch it hither, Numps."

The vessel being produced, I bade him decant his bottle into it, which he having done, I nodded in a very deliberate manner, and said, "Pledge you." He stared at me for some time, and crying, "What! all at one pull, Measter Randan?" I answered, "At one pull, sir; you are no milk-sop — we shall do you justice." "Shall you?" said he, shaking me by the hand; "odds then, I 'll see it out, an 't were a mile to the bottom. Here 's to our better acquaintance, Measter Randan;" so saying, he applied it to his lips, and emptied it in a breath. I knew the effect of it would be almost instantaneous; therefore, taking the cup, began to discharge my bottle into it, telling him he was now qualified to drink with the Cham of Tartary. I had no sooner pronounced these words, than he took umbrage at them, and, after several attempts to spit, made shift to stutter out, "A f—t for your Chams of T— Tartary! — a am a f—f—free-born Englishman, worth th—three thousand a year, and v—value no man, d—me!" Then, dropping his jaw, and fixing his eyes, he hiccupped aloud, and fell upon the floor as mute as a flounder. Mr. Freeman, heartily glad at his defeat, assisted me in carrying him to bed, where we left him to the care of his servants, and went home to our respective habitations, congratulating each other on our good fortune.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

MISS WILLIAMS INFORMS ME OF NARCISSA'S APPROBATION OF MY FLAME — I APPEASE THE SQUIRE — WRITE TO MY MISTRESS, AM BLESSED WITH AN ANSWER — BEG LEAVE OF HER BROTHER TO DANCE WITH HER AT A BALL; OBTAIN HIS CONSENT AND HERS — ENJOY A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH HER — AM PERPLEXED WITH REFLECTIONS — HAVE THE HONOUR OF APPEARING HER PARTNER AT A BALL — WE ARE COMPLIMENTED BY A CERTAIN NOBLEMAN — HE DISCOVERS SOME SYMPTOMS OF A PASSION FOR NARCISSA — I AM STUNG WITH JEALOUSY — NARCISSA ALARMED, RETIRES — I OBSERVE MELINDA IN THE COMPANY — THE SQUIRE IS CAPTIVATED BY HER BEAUTY.

I WAS met next morning, at the usual place, by Miss Williams, who gave me joy of the progress I had made in the affection of her mistress, and blessed me with an account of that dear creature's conversation with her, after she had retired the night before from our company. I could scarce believe her information, when she recounted her expressions in my favour, so much more warm and passionate were they than my most sanguine hopes had presaged; and was particularly pleased to hear that she approved of my behaviour to her brother after she withdrew. Transported at the news of my happiness, I presented my ring to the

messenger, as a testimony of my gratitude and satisfaction; but she was above such mercenary considerations, and refused my compliment with some resentment, saying she was not a little mortified to see my opinion of her so low and contemptible. I did myself a piece of justice by explaining my behaviour on this head, and, to convince her of my esteem, promised to be ruled by her directions in the prosecution of the whole affair, which I had so much at heart, that the repose of my life depended upon the consequence.

As I fervently wished for another interview, where I might pour out the effusions of my love without danger of being interrupted, and perhaps reap some endearing return from the queen of my desires, I implored her advice and assistance in promoting this event. But she gave me to understand, that Narcissa would make no precipitate compliances of this kind, and that I would do well to cultivate her brother's acquaintance, in the course of which I should not want opportunities of removing that reserve which my mistress thought herself obliged to maintain during the infancy of our correspondence. In the meantime she promised to tell her lady, that I had endeavoured, by presents and persuasions, to prevail upon her (Miss Williams) to deliver a letter from me, which she had refused to charge herself with, until she would know Narcissa's sentiments of the matter; and said, by these means she did not doubt of being able to open a literary communication between us, which could not fail of introducing more intimate connexions.

I approved of her counsel, and, our appointment being renewed for next day, left her with an intent of falling upon some method of being reconciled to the squire, who, I supposed, would be offended with the trick we had put upon him. With this view, I consulted Freeman, who, from his knowledge of the fox-hunter's disposition, assured me there was no other method of pacifying him, than that of sacrificing ourselves, for one night, to an equal match with him in drinking. This expedient, I found myself necessitated to comply with, for the interest of my passion, and therefore determined to commit the debauch at my own lodgings, that I might run no risk of being discovered by Narcissa in a state of brutal degeneracy. Mr. Freeman, who was to be of the party, went at my desire to the squire, in order to engage him, while I took care to furnish myself for his reception. My invitation was accepted, my guests honoured me with their company in the evening, when Bruin gave me to understand that he had drunk many tuns of wine in his life, but was never served such a trick as I had played upon him the night before. I promised to atone for my trespass, and, having ordered to every man his bottle, began the contest with a bumper to the health of Narcissa. The toasts circulated with great devotion, the liquor began to operate, our mirth grew noisy, and as Freeman and I had the advantage of drinking small French claret, the savage was effectually tamed before our senses were in the least affected, and carried home in an apoplexy of drunkenness.

I was next morning, as usual, favoured with a visit

from my kind and punctual confidant, who telling me she was permitted to receive my letters for her mistress, I took up the pen immediately, and following the first dictates of my passion, wrote as follows: —

"Dear Madam, — Were it possible for the powers of utterance to reveal the soft emotions of my soul; the fond anxiety, the glowing hopes, the chilling fears, that rule my breast by turns; I should need no other witness than this paper to evince the purity and ardour of that flame your charms have kindled in my heart. But, alas! expression wrongs my love! I am inspired with conceptions that no language can convey! Your beauty fills me with wonder! your understanding with ravishment, and your goodness with adoration! I am transported with desire, distracted with doubts, and tortured with impatience! Suffer me then, lovely arbitress of my fate, to approach you in person, to breathe in soft murmurs my passion to your ear, to offer the sacrifice of a heart overflowing with the most genuine and disinterested love; to gaze with ecstasy on the divine object of my wishes, to hear the music of her enchanting tongue; and to rejoice in her smiles of approbation, which will banish the most intolerable suspense from the bosom of

"Your enraptured R—— R——."

Having finished this effusion, I committed it to the care of my faithful friend, with an injunction to second my entreaty with all her eloquence and influence; and in the meantime went to dress, with an intention of visiting Mrs. Snapper and Miss, whom I had utterly neglected, and indeed almost forgot, since my dear Narcissa had resumed the empire of my soul. The old gentlewoman received me very kindly, and

Miss affected a frankness and gaiety, which, however, I could easily perceive were forced and dissembled; among other things, she pretended to joke me upon my passion for Narcissa, which she averred was no secret, and asked if I intended to dance with her at the next assembly. I was a good deal concerned to find myself become the town-talk on this subject, lest the squire, having notice of my inclinations, should disapprove of them, and, by breaking off all correspondence with me, deprive me of the opportunities I now enjoyed. But I resolved to use the interest I had with him, while it lasted; and that very night meeting him occasionally, asked his permission to solicit her company at the ball, which he very readily granted, to my inexpressible satisfaction.

Having been kept awake the greatest part of the night by a thousand delightful reveries that took possession of my fancy, I got up by times, and, flying to the place of rendezvous, had in a little time the pleasure of seeing Miss Williams approach with a smile on her countenance, which I interpreted into a good omen. Neither was I mistaken in my presage. She presented me with a letter from the idol of my soul, which, after having kissed it devoutly, I opened with the utmost eagerness, and was blessed with her approbation in these terms: —

"Sir, — To say I look upon you with indifference, would be a piece of dissimulation, which I think no decorum requires, and no custom can justify. As my heart never felt an impression that my tongue was ashamed to declare, I will not scruple to own myself

pleased with your passion, confident of your integrity, and so well convinced of my own discretion, that I should not hesitate in granting you the interview you desire, were I not overawed by the prying curiosity of a malicious world, the censure of which might be fatally prejudicial to the reputation of

"Your Narcissa."

No anchorite in the ecstasy of devotion ever adored a relique with more fervour than that with which I kissed this inimitable proof of my charmer's candour, generosity, and affection! I read it over an hundred times; was ravished with her confession in the beginning; but the subscription of *Your Narcissa*, yielded me such delight as I had never felt before. My happiness was still increased by Miss Williams, who blessed me with a repetition of her lady's tender expressions in my favour, when she received and read my letter. In short, I had all the reason in the world to believe that this gentle creature's bosom was possessed by a passion for me, as warm, though perhaps not so impetuous, as mine for her.

I informed my friend of the squire's consent to my dancing with Narcissa at the ball, and desired her to tell her mistress, that I would do myself the honour of visiting her in the afternoon, in consequence of his permission, when I hoped to find her as indulgent as her brother had been complaisant in that particular. Miss Williams expressed a good deal of joy, at hearing I was so much in favour with the fox-hunter, and ventured to assure me, that my visit would be very agreeable to my mistress, the

rather, because Bruin was engaged to dine abroad. This was a circumstance which, I scarce need say, pleased me. I went immediately to the Long Room, where I found him, and affecting to know nothing of the engagement, told him, I would do myself the pleasure to wait upon him in the afternoon, and to present his sister with a ticket for the ball. He shook me by the hand, according to custom, and giving me to understand that he was to dine abroad, desired me to go and drink tea with Narcissa notwithstanding, and promised to prepare her for my visit in the meantime.

Everything succeeding thus to my wish, I waited with incredible impatience for the time, which no sooner arrived, than I hastened to the scene, which my fancy had preoccupied long before. I was introduced accordingly to the dear enchantress, whom I found accompanied by Miss Williams, who, on pretence of ordering tea, retired at my approach. This favourable accident, which alarmed my whole soul, disordered her also. I found myself actuated by an irresistible impulse; I advanced to her with eagerness and awe, and, profiting by the confusion that prevailed over her, clasped the fair angel in my arms, and imprinted a glowing kiss upon her lips, more soft and fragrant than the dewy rosebud just bursting from the stem! Her face was in an instant covered with blushes — her eyes sparkled with resentment — I threw myself at her feet, and implored her pardon. Her love became advocate in my cause; her look softened into forgiveness; she raised me up, and chid me with so much sweetness of displeasure,

that I should have been tempted to repeat the offence, had not the coming in of a servant with the tea-board prevented my presumption. While we were subject to be interrupted or overheard, we conversed about the approaching ball, at which she promised to grace me as a partner; but when the equipage was removed, and we were left alone, I resumed the more interesting theme, and expressed myself with such transport and agitation, that my mistress, fearing I would commit some extravagance, rung the bell for her maid, whom she detained in the room, as a check upon my vivacity. I was not sorry for this precaution, because I could unbosom myself without reserve before Miss Williams, who was the confidant of us both. I therefore gave a loose to the inspirations of my passion, which operated so successfully upon the tender affections of Narcissa, that she laid aside the constraint she had hitherto wore, and blessed me with the most melting declaration of her mutual flame! It was impossible for me to forbear taking the advantage of this endearing condescension. She now gently yielded to my embraces; while I, encircling all that I held dear within my arms, tasted in advance the joys of that paradise I hoped in a little time wholly to possess! We spent the afternoon in all the ecstasy of hope, that the most fervent love, exchanged by mutual vows, could inspire; and Miss Williams was so much affected with our chaste caresses, which recalled the sad remembrance of what she was, that her eyes were filled with tears.

The evening being pretty far advanced, I forced

myself from the dear object of my flame, who indulged me in a tender embrace at parting; and, repairing to my lodgings, communicated to my friend Strap every circumstance of my happiness, which filled him with so much pleasure, that it ran over at his eyes; and he prayed heartily, that no envious devil might, as formerly, dash the cup of blessing from my lip. When I reflected on what had happened, and especially on the unreserved protestations of Narcissa's love, I could not help being amazed at her omitting to inquire into the particular circumstances of the life and fortune of one whom she had favoured with her affection, and I began to be a little anxious about the situation of her finances, well knowing that I should do an irreparable injury to the person my soul held most dear, if I should espouse her, without being able to support her in the rank which was certainly her due. I had heard indeed, while I served her aunt, that her father had left her a considerable sum; and that everybody believed she would inherit the greatest part of her kinswoman's dowry; but I did not know how far she might be restricted by the old gentleman's will, in the enjoyment of what he left her; and I was too well informed of the virtuoso's late conduct, to think my mistress could have any expectations from that quarter. I confided, however, in the good sense and policy of my charmer, who, I was sure, would not consent to unite her fate with mine, before she had fully considered and provided for the consequence.

The ball-night being arrived, I dressed myself in

a suit I had reserved for some grand occasion; and having drank tea with Narcissa and her brother, conducted my angel to the scene, where she in a moment eclipsed all her female competitors for beauty, and attracted the admiration of the whole assembly. My heart dilated with pride on this occasion, and my triumph rejected all bounds, when, after we had danced together, a certain nobleman, remarkable for his figure and influence in the *beau monde*, came up, and in the hearing of all present, honoured us with a very particular compliment, upon our accomplishments and appearance. But this transport was soon checked when I perceived his lordship attach himself with great assiduity to my mistress, and say some warm things, which, I thought, savoured too much of passion. It was then I began to feel the pangs of jealousy — I dreaded the power and address of my rival — I sickened at his discourse; when she opened her lips to answer, my heart died within me. When she smiled, I felt the pains of the d—d! I was enraged at his presumption; I cursed her complaisance; at length he quitted her, and went to the other side of the room. Narcissa suspecting nothing of the rage that inflamed me, put some questions to me, as soon as he was gone, to which I made no reply, but assumed a grim look, which too well denoted the agitation of my breast, and surprised her not a little. She no sooner observed my emotion, than she changed colour, and asked what ailed me? but, before I could make answer, her brother, pulling me by the sleeve, bade me take notice of a lady who sat

fronting us, whom I immediately, to my vast astonishment, distinguished to be Melinda, accompanied by her mother, and an elderly gentleman, whom I did not know. "Wounds! Mr. Randan," cried the squire, "is she not a delicate piece of stuff? 'Sdeath! I have a good mind — if I thought she was a single person" —

Notwithstanding the perplexity I was in, I had reflection enough to foresee that my passion might suffer greatly by the presence of this lady, who in all probability would revenge herself upon me for having formerly disgraced her, by spreading reports to my prejudice. I was therefore alarmed at these symptoms of the squire's admiration; and for some time did not know what reply to make, when he asked my opinion of her beauty. At length I came to a determination, and told him that her name was Melinda, that she had a fortune of ten thousand pounds, and was said to be under promise of marriage to a certain lord, who deferred his nuptials a few months, until he should be of age. I thought this piece of intelligence, which I had myself invented, would have hindered him effectually from entertaining any farther thoughts of her; but I was egregiously mistaken. The fox-hunter had too much self-sufficiency, to despair of success against any competitor on earth. He therefore made light of her engagement, saying, with a smile of self-approbation, "Mayhap she will change her mind — what signifies his being a lord? I think myself as good a man as e'er a lord in Christendom; — and I'll see if a commoner worth three thousand a year won't serve her

turn." This determination startled me not a little. I knew he would soon discover the contrary of what I advanced; and, as I believed he would find her ear open to his addresses, did not doubt of meeting with every obstacle in my amour that her malice could invent, and her influence execute. This reflection increased my chagrin. My vexation was evident. Narcissa insisted on going home immediately; and, as I led her to the door, her noble admirer, with a look full of languishment, directed to her a profound bow, which stung me to the soul. Before she went into the chair, she asked, with an appearance of concern, what was the matter with me? and I could pronounce no more than, "By heaven! I'm distracted."

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

TORTURED WITH JEALOUSY, I GO HOME AND ABUSE STRAP — RECEIVE A MESSAGE FROM NARCISSA, IN CONSEQUENCE OF WHICH I HASTEN TO HER APARTMENT, WHERE HER ENDEARING ASSURANCES BANISH ALL MY DOUBTS AND APPREHENSIONS — IN MY RETREAT DISCOVER SOMEBODY IN THE DARK, WHOM, SUSPECTING TO BE A SPY, I RESOLVE TO KILL; BUT, TO MY GREAT SURPRISE, AM CONVINCED OF HIS BEING NO OTHER THAN STRAP — MELINDA SLANDERS ME — I BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH LORD QUIVERWIT, WHO ENDEAVOURS TO SOUND ME WITH REGARD TO NARCISSA — THE SQUIRE IS INTRODUCED TO HIS LORDSHIP, AND GROWS COLD TOWARDS ME — I LEARN FROM MY CONFIDANT, THAT THIS NOBLEMAN PROFESSES HONOURABLE LOVE TO MY MISTRESS, WHO CONTINUES FAITHFUL TO ME, NOTWITHSTANDING THE SCANDALOUS REPORTS SHE HAS HEARD TO MY PREJUDICE — I AM MORTIFIED WITH AN ASSURANCE THAT HER WHOLE FORTUNE DEPENDS UPON THE PLEASURE OF HER BROTHER — MR. FREEMAN CONDOLES ME ON THE DECLINE OF MY CHARACTER, WHICH I VINDICATE SO MUCH TO HIS SATISFACTION, THAT HE UNDERTAKES TO COMBAT FAME IN MY BEHALF.

HAVING uttered this exclamation, at which she sighed, I went home in the condition of a frantic bedlamite; and finding the fire in my apartment almost extinguished, vented my fury upon poor Strap, whose ear I pinched with such violence, that he roared hid-

eously with pain, and, when I quitted my hold, looked so foolishly aghast, that no unconcerned spectator could have seen him, without being seized with an immoderate fit of laughter. It is true, I was soon sensible of the injury I had done, and asked pardon for the outrage I had committed; upon which my faithful valet, shaking his head, said, "I forgive you, and may God forgive you." But he could not help shedding some tears at my unkindness. I felt unspeakable remorse for what I had done, cursed my own ingratitude, and considered his tears as a reproach that my soul, in her present disturbance, could not bear. It set all my passions into a ferment, I swore horrible oaths without meaning or application, I foamed at the mouth, kicked the chairs about the room, and played abundance of mad pranks, that frightened my friend almost out of his senses. At length my transport subsided, I became melancholy, and wept insensibly.

During this state of dejection, I was surprised with the appearance of Miss Williams, whom Strap, blubbering all the while, had conducted into the chamber, without giving me previous notice of her approach. She was extremely affected with my condition, which she had learned from him, begged me to moderate my passion, suspend my conjectures, and follow her to Narcissa, who desired to see me forthwith. That dear name operated upon me like a charm! I started up, and without opening my lips, was conducted into her apartment through the garden, which we entered by a private door. I found the adorable creature in tears!—I was melted at the

sight — we continued silent for some time — my heart was too full to speak — her snowy bosom heaved with fond resentment; at last she sobbing cried, "What have I done to disoblige you?" My heart was pierced with the tender question! — I drew near with the utmost reverence of affection! — I fell upon my knees before her, and kissing her hand, exclaimed, "O! thou art all goodness and perfection! — I am undone by want of merit! — I am unworthy to possess thy charms, which heaven hath destined for the arms of some more favoured being." She guessed the cause of my disquiet, upbraided me gently for my suspicion, and gave me such flattering assurances of her eternal fidelity, that all my doubts and fears forsook me, and peace and satisfaction reigned within my breast.

At midnight, I left the fair nymph to her repose, and, being let out by Miss Williams at the garden gate by which I entered, began to explore my way homeward in the dark, when I heard at my back a noise like that of a baboon when he mows and chatters. I turned instantly, and perceiving something black, concluded I was discovered by some spy employed to watch for that purpose. Aroused at this conjecture, by which the reputation of the virtuous Narcissa appeared in jeopardy, I drew my sword, and would have sacrificed him to her fame, had not the voice of Strap restrained my arm. It was with great difficulty he could pronounce, "D—d—do! mum—um—um—murder me, if you please." Such an effect had the cold upon his jaws, that his teeth rattled like a pair of castanets. Pleased to be thus

undeceived, I laughed at his consternation, and asked what brought him thither? Upon which he gave me to understand, that his concern for me had induced him to follow me to that place, where the same reason had detained him till now; and he frankly owned, that, in spite of the esteem he had for Miss Williams, he began to be very uneasy about me, considering the disposition in which I went abroad, and if I had staid much longer, would have certainly alarmed the neighbourhood in my behalf. The knowledge of this his intention confounded me! I represented to him the mischievous consequences that would have attended such a rash action, and cautioning him severely against any such design for the future, concluded my admonition with an assurance, that, in case he should ever act so madly, I would, without hesitation, put him to death. "Have a little patience," cried he, in a lamentable tone; "your displeasure will do the business, without your committing murder." I was touched with this reproach; and, as soon as we got home, made it my business to appease him, by explaining the cause of that transport during which I had used him so unworthily.

Next day, when I went into the Long Room, I observed several whispers circulate all of a sudden, and did not doubt that Melinda had been busy with my character; but I consoled myself with the love of Narcissa, upon which I rested with the most perfect confidence, and going up to the rowly-powly table, won a few pieces from my suspected rival, who, with an easy politeness, entered into conversation with

me, and desiring my company at the coffee-house, treated me with tea and chocolate. I remembered Strutwell, and guarded against his insinuating behaviour; nor was my suspicion wrong placed; he artfully turned the discourse upon Narcissa, and endeavoured, by hinting at an intrigue he pretended to be engaged in elsewhere, to learn what connexion there was between her and me. But all his finesse was ineffectual; I was convinced of his dissimulation, and gave such general answers to his inquiries, that he was forced to drop the subject, and talk of something else.

While we conversed in this manner, the savage came in with another gentleman, who introduced him to his lordship; and he was received with such peculiar marks of distinction, that I was persuaded the courtier intended to use him in some shape or other; and from thence I drew an unlucky omen. But I had more cause to be dismayed the following day, when I saw the squire in company with Melinda and her mother, who honoured me with several disdainful glances; and when I afterwards threw myself in his way, instead of the cordial shake of the hand, he returned my salute with a cold repetition of "Servant, servant;" which he pronounced with such indifference, or rather contempt, that, if he had not been Narcissa's brother, I should have affronted him in public.

These occurrences disturbed me not a little. I foresaw the brooding storm, and armed myself with resolution for the occasion; but Narcissa being at stake, I was far from being resigned. I could have

renounced every other comfort of life with some degree of fortitude; but the prospect of losing her disabled all my philosophy, and tortured my soul into madness.

Miss Williams found me next morning full of anxious tumult, which did not abate, when she told me, that my Lord Quiverwit, having professed honourable intentions, had been introduced to my lovely mistress by her brother, who had, at the same time, from the information of Melinda, spoke of me as an Irish fortune-hunter, without either birth or estate; who supported myself in the appearance of a gentleman by sharping and other infamous practices; and who was of such an obscure origin, that I did not even know my own extraction. Though I expected all this malice, I could not hear it with temper, especially as truth was so blended with falsehood in the assertion, that it would be almost impossible to separate the one from the other in my vindication. But I said nothing on this head, being impatient to know how Narcissa had been affected with the discovery. That generous creature, far from believing these imputations, was no sooner withdrawn with her confidant, than she inveighed with great warmth against the malevolence of the world, to which only she ascribed the whole of what had been said to my disadvantage; and calling every circumstance of my behaviour to her into review before her, found everything so polite, honourable, and disinterested, that she could not harbour the least doubt of my being the gentleman I assumed. "I have indeed," said she, "purposely forbore to ask

the particulars of his life, lest the recapitulation of some misfortunes, which he has undergone, should give him pain : and, as to the article of his fortune, I own myself equally afraid of inquiring into it, and of discovering the situation of my own, lest we should find ourselves both unhappy in the explanation ; for alas! my provision is conditional, and depends entirely on my marrying with my brother's consent."

I was thunderstruck with this intelligence; the light forsook my eyes, the colour vanished from my cheeks, and I remained in a state of universal trepidation! My female friend perceiving my disorder, encouraged me with assurances of Narcissa's constancy, and the hope of some accident favourable to our love ; and, as a further consolation, gave me to understand, that she had acquainted my mistress with the outlines of my life ; and that, although she was no stranger to the present low state of my finances, her love and esteem were rather increased than diminished by the knowledge of my circumstances. I was greatly comforted by this assurance, which saved me a world of confusion and anxiety: for I must have imparted my situation one day to Narcissa ; and this task I could not have performed without shame and disorder.

As I did not doubt that, by this time, the scandalous aspersions of Melinda were diffused all over the town, I resolved to collect my whole strength of assurance, to brow-beat the efforts of her malice, and to publish her adventure with the frenchified barber, by way of reprisal. In the meantime, having promised to be at the garden gate about midnight, Miss Williams took her leave, bidding me repose myself

entirely on the affection of my dear Narcissa, which was as perfect as inviolable. Before I went abroad, I was visited by Freeman, who came on purpose to inform me of the infamous stories that were raised at my expense. I heard them with great temper, and in my turn disclosed everything that had happened between Melinda and me; and, among other circumstances, entertained him with the story of the barber, letting him know what share his friend Banter had in that affair: he was convinced of the injury my reputation had suffered, and no longer doubting the fountain from whence this deluge of slander had flowed upon me, undertook to undeceive the town in my behalf, and roll the stream back upon its source; but, in the meantime, cautioned me from appearing in public while the prepossession was so strong against me, lest I should meet with some affront that might have bad consequences.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

I RECEIVE AN EXTRAORDINARY MESSAGE AT THE DOOR OF THE LONG ROOM, WHICH I HOWEVER ENTER, AND AFFRONT THE SQUIRE, WHO THREATENS TO TAKE THE LAW OF ME — REBUKE MELINDA FOR HER MALICE — SHE WEEPS WITH VEXATION — LORD QUIVERWIT IS SEVERE UPON ME — I RETORT HIS SARCASM — AM RECEIVED WITH THE UTMOST TENDERNESS BY NARCISSA, WHO DESIRES TO HEAR THE STORY OF MY LIFE — WE VOW ETERNAL CONSTANCY TO ONE ANOTHER — I RETIRE — AM WAKED BY A MESSENGER, WHO BRINGS A CHALLENGE FROM QUIVERWIT, WHOM I MEET, ENGAGE, AND VANQUISH.

I THANKED him for his advice, which, however, my pride and resentment would not permit me to follow; for he no sooner left me, in order to do justice to my character among his friends and acquaintance, than I sallied out, and went directly to the Long Room. I was met at the door by a servant, who presented to me a billet without a subscription, importing that my presence was disagreeable to the company, and desiring I would take the hint without further disturbance, and bestow myself elsewhere for the future. This peremptory message filled me with indignation. I followed the fellow who delivered it, and seizing him by the collar, in presence of all the company,

threatened to put him instantly to death if he did not discover the scoundrel who had charged him with such an impudent commission, that I might punish him as he deserved. The messenger, affrighted at my menaces and furious looks, fell upon his knees, and told me, that the gentleman who ordered him to deliver the letter was no other than Narcissa's brother, who, at that time, stood at the other end of the room, talking to Melinda. I went up to him immediately, and, in the hearing of his inamorata, accosted him in these words, "Look'ee, squire, was it not for one consideration that protects you from my resentment, I would cane you where you stand, for having had the presumption to send me this scurrilous intimation;" which I tore to pieces, and threw in his face: at the same time, darting an angry regard at his mistress, I told her, I was sorry she had put it out of my power to compliment her upon her invention, but at the expense of her good-nature and veracity.

Her admirer, whose courage never rose but in proportion to the wine he had swallowed, instead of resenting my address in what is called an honourable way, threatened to prosecute me for an assault, and took witnesses accordingly; while she, piqued at his pusillanimous behaviour, and enraged at the sarcasm I had uttered against her, endeavoured to make her quarrel a public cause, and wept aloud with spite and vexation. The tears of a lady could not fail of attracting the notice and concern of the spectators, to whom she complained of my rudeness with great bitterness, saying, if she was a man, I durst not use her

so. The greatest part of the gentlemen, already prejudiced against me, were offended at the liberty I had taken, as appeared from their looks; though none of them signified their disgust in any other way, except my Lord Quiverwit, who ventured to say, with a sneer, that I was in the right to establish my own character, of which he had now no longer any doubt. Nettled at this severe equivoque, which raised a laugh at my expense, I replied with some warmth, "I am proud of having in that particular got the start of your lordship." He made no answer to my repartee, but, with a contemptuous smile, walked off, leaving me in a very disagreeable situation. In vain did I make up to several people of my acquaintance, whose conversation, I hoped, would banish my confusion; everybody shunned me like a person infected, and I should not have been able to bear my disgrace, had not the idea of the ever-faithful and fond Narcissa come to my relief. I quitted the scene of my mortification, and, sauntering about the town, happened to wake from my contemplation, when I found myself just opposite to a toy-shop, which I entered, and purchased a ring set with a ruby in the form of a heart, surrounded by diamond sparks, for which I paid ten guineas, intending it for a present to the charmer of my soul.

I was introduced, at the hour appointed, to this divine creature, who, notwithstanding what she had heard to my disadvantage, received me with the utmost confidence and tenderness; and having been informed of the general sketches of my life by Miss Williams, expressed a desire of knowing the particular

circumstances, which I related with great candour, omitting, however, some things, that I concluded altogether improper for her ear, and which the reader's reflection will easily suggest. As my story was little else than a recital of misfortunes, the tear of sympathy ceased not to trickle down her enchanting eyes during the whole of the narration, which when I had finished, she recompensed me for my trouble with the most endearing protestations of eternal love. She bewailed her restricted condition, as it was the means of retarding my happiness; told me that Lord Quiverwit, by her brother's permission, had been to drink tea with her that very afternoon, and actually proposed marriage; and, seeing me extremely affected with this piece of information, offered to give me a convincing proof of her affection, by espousing me in private, and leaving the rest to fate. I was penetrated with this instance of her regard, but that I might not be outdone in generosity, resisted the bewitching temptation, in consideration of her honour and interest; at the same time, I presented my ring as a pledge of my inviolable attachment, and on my knees implored Heaven to shower its curses on my head, if ever my heart should entertain one thought unworthy of the passion I then avowed. She received my token, gave me in return her picture in miniature, exquisitely drawn, and set in gold; and in the same posture called Heaven to witness, and to judge her flame. Our vows being thus reciprocally breathed, a confidence of hope ensued, and our mutual fondness becoming as intimate as innocence would allow, I grew insensible of the progress of time, and

it was morning before I could tear myself from this darling of my soul! — My good angel foresaw what would happen, and permitted me to indulge myself on this occasion, in consideration of the fatal absence I was doomed to suffer.

I went to bed immediately on my return to my lodging, and, having slept about two hours, was waked by Strap, who, in great confusion, told me, there was a footman below with a letter, which he would deliver to nobody but myself. Alarmed at this piece of news, I desired my friend to show him up to my chamber, and received the following letter, which, he said, required an immediate answer: —

"SIR, — When any man injures my honour, let the difference of rank between us be ever so great, I am contented to waive the privilege of my quality, and to seek reparation from him on equal terms. The insolence of your reply to me yesterday in the Long Room I might have overlooked, had not your presumptive emulation in a much more interesting affair, and a discovery which I made this morning, concurred in persuading me to chastise your audacity with my sword. If you, therefore, have spirit enough to support the character you assume, you will not fail to follow the bearer immediately to a convenient place, where you shall be met by "QUIVERWIT."

Whether I was enervated by the love and favour of Narcissa, or awed by the superior station of my antagonist, I know not, but I never had less inclination to fight than at this time. However, finding there was a necessity for vindicating the reputation of my mistress, as well as for asserting my own

honour, I forthwith rose, and, dressing in a hurry, put on my sword, bade Strap attend me, and set out with my conductor, cursing my bad fortune all the way for having been observed in my return from my angel; for so I interpreted his lordship's discovery. When I came within sight of my rival, his lacquey told me he had orders to stop; upon which, I commanded Strap to halt also, while I walked forward, resolving, if possible, to come to an explanation with my challenger before we should come to battle. Nor was an opportunity wanting; for I no sooner approached, than he asked, with a stern countenance, what business I had in Mr. Topehall's garden so early in the morning? "I don't know, my lord," said I, "how to answer a question put to me with such magisterial haughtiness. If your lordship will please to expostulate calmly, you will have no cause to repent of your condescension; otherwise, I am not to be intimidated into any confession." "There is no room for denial," answered he; "I saw you come out with my own eyes." "Did any other person see me?" said I. "I neither know, nor care," said he; "I want no other evidence than that of my own senses." Pleased to hear that the suspicion was confined to him alone, I endeavoured to appease his jealousy, by owning an intrigue with the waiting-maid; but he had too much discernment to be so easily imposed upon, and told me there was only one way to convince him of the truth of what I alleged, which was no other than renouncing all claim to Narcissa upon oath, and promising, upon honour, never to speak to her for the future.

DUEL WITH LORD QUIVERWIT

Exasperated at this proposal, I unsheathed my sword, saying, "Heavens! what title have you, or any man on earth, to impose such terms on me!" He did the same, and making towards me with a contracted brow, said, I was a villain, and had dishonoured Narcissa. "He's a scandalous villain," I replied, in a transport of fury, "who brands me with that imputation! She is a thousand times more chaste than the mother that bore you; and I will assert her honour with my heart's blood!" So saying, I rushed upon him with more eagerness than address, and endeavouring to get within his point, received a wound in my neck, which redoubled my rage. He excelled me in temper as well as in skill, by which means he parried my thrusts with great calmness, until I had almost exhausted my spirits; and when he perceived me beginning to flag, attacked me fiercely in his turn. Finding himself, however, better opposed than he expected, he resolved to follow his lunge, and close with me; accordingly, his sword entered my waistcoat, on the side of the breastbone, and, running up between my shirt and skin, appeared over my shoulder. I imagined that his weapon had perforated my lungs, and, of consequence, that the wound was mortal; therefore, determined not to die unrevenged, I seized his shell, which was close to my breast, before he could disentangle his point, and, keeping it fast with my left hand, shortened my own sword with my right, intending to run him through the heart; but he received the thrust in the left arm, which penetrated up to the shoulder-blade. Disappointed

in this expectation, and afraid still that death would frustrate my revenge, I grappled with him, and, being much the stronger, threw him upon the ground, where I wrested his sword out of his hand; and, so great was my confusion, instead of turning the point upon him, struck out three of his fore teeth with the hilt. In the meantime, our servants seeing us fall, ran up to separate and assist us; but, before their approach, I was upon my feet, and had discovered that my supposed mortal wound was only a slight scratch. The knowledge of my own safety disarmed me of a good deal of my resentment, and I began to inquire with some concern into the situation of my antagonist, who remained on the ground bleeding plentifully at his mouth and arm; I helped his footman to raise him, and having bound up his wound with my handkerchief, assured him it was not dangerous; I likewise restored his sword, and offered to support him to his house. He thanked me with an air of sullen dignity, and, whispering that I should hear from him soon, went away, leaning on his servant's shoulder.

I was surprised at this promise, which I construed into a threat; and resolved, if ever he should call me out again, to use whatever advantage fortune might give me over him in another manner. In the meantime, I had leisure to take notice of Strap, who seemed quite stupefied with horror. I comforted him with an assurance that I had received no damage, and explained the nature of this affair as we walked homeward. By the time I had got into my apartment, I found the wound in my neck

stiff and uneasy, and a good deal of clotted blood run down upon my shirt. Upon which, I pulled off my coat and waistcoat, and unbuttoned my collar, that I might dress it with more ease. My friend no sooner perceived my shirt quite dyed with blood, than, imagining I had got at least twenty thousand wounds, he cried, "O Jesus!" and fell flat on the floor. I stopped the bleeding with a little dry lint, and applying a plaster over it, cleansed myself from the gore, shifted and dressed, while he lay senseless at my feet; so that, when he recovered, and saw me perfectly well, he could scarce believe his own eyes. Now that the danger was past, I was very well pleased with what had happened, hoping that it would soon become known, and, consequently, dignify my character not a little in this place. I was also proud of having shown myself, in some shape, worthy the love of Narcissa, who, I was persuaded, would not think the worse of me for what I had done.

CHAPTER SIXTY

I AM VISITED BY FREEMAN, WITH WHOM I APPEAR IN PUBLIC, AND AM CARESSED — AM SENT FOR BY LORD QUIVERWIT, WHOSE PRESENCE I QUIT IN A PASSION — NARCISSA IS CARRIED OFF BY HER BROTHER — I INTEND TO PURSUE HIM, AND AM DISSUADED BY MY FRIEND — ENGAGE IN PLAY, AND LOSE ALL MY MONEY — SET OUT FOR LONDON — TRY MY FORTUNE AT THE GAMING-TABLE WITHOUT SUCCESS — RECEIVE A LETTER FROM NARCISSA — BILK MY TAILOR.

WHILE I entertained myself with these reflections, the news of the duel being communicated by some unknown channel, spread all over the town. I was visited by Freeman, who testified his surprise at finding me; for he was told that Lord Quiverwit being dead of his wounds, I had absconded, in order to avoid the cognizance of the law. I asked if people guessed the occasion of the quarrel; and, understanding it was attributed to his lordship's resentment of my reply in the Long Room, confirmed that conjecture, glad to find Narcissa unsuspected. My friend, after I had assured him that my antagonist was in no danger, wished me joy of the event, than which, he said, nothing could happen more opportunely to sup-

port the idea he had given of my character to his friends, among whom he had been very assiduous in my behalf.

On the strength of this assurance, I went with him to the coffee-house, where I was saluted by a great many of those very persons who had shunned me the preceding day; and I found everybody making merry with the story of Melinda's French gallant. While I remained in this place, I received a message from Lord Quiverwit, desiring, if I was not engaged, to see me at his house.

Thither I immediately repaired, and was conducted to an apartment, where I was received by his lordship in bed. When we were left by ourselves, he thanked me, in very polite terms, for having used the advantage fortune had given me over him with such moderation; and asked pardon for any offence his resentment might have prompted him to commit. "I would willingly," said he, "make you my friend; but as it is impossible for me to divest myself of my passion for Narcissa, I am too well convinced of your sentiments to think we shall ever agree on that subject. I took the liberty, therefore, of sending for you, in order to own candidly that I cannot help opposing your success with that young lady; though, at the same time, I promise to regulate my opposition by the dictates of justice and honour. This, however, I think proper to advertise you of, that she has no independent fortune; and if you should even succeed in your addresses, you would have the mortification to see her reduced to indigence, unless you have wherewithal to support her; and I am credibly

informed of your incapacity that way. Nay, I will confess, that, urged by this consideration, I have actually sent notice to her brother of the progress I suspect you have made in her affection, and desired him to take his precautions accordingly." Alarmed and provoked at this information, I told his lordship, that I did not see how he could reconcile that piece of conduct with his profession of open dealing, and flung away from him in a passion.

As I walked homeward, in hope of hearing from my mistress as usual, by means of Miss Williams, I was surprised with the waving of a handkerchief from the window of a coach and six that passed by me at full speed; and, upon further observation, I saw a servant on horseback riding after it, who, I knew by his livery, belonged to the squire. Thunderstruck with this discovery, the knowledge of my misfortune rushed all at once on my reflection! I guessed immediately that the signal was made by the dear hand of Narcissa, who, being hurried away in consequence of Lord Quiverwit's message to her brother, had no other method of relating her distress, and imploring my assistance. Frantic with this conjecture, I ran to my lodgings, snatched my pistols, and ordered Strap to get post-horses, with such incoherence of speech and disorder, that the poor valet, terrified with the suspicion of another duel, instead of providing what I desired, went forthwith to Freeman, who, being informed of my behaviour, came straight to my apartment, and conjured me so pathetically to make him acquainted with the cause

of my uneasiness, that I could not refuse telling him my happiness was fled with Narcissa, and that I must retrieve her, or perish. He represented the madness of such an undertaking, and endeavoured to divert me from it with great strength of friendship and reason. But all his arguments would have been ineffectual, had he not put me in mind of the dependence I ought to have on the love of Narcissa, and the attachment of her maid, who could not fail of finding opportunities to advertise me of their situation; and at the same time demonstrated the injury my charmer's reputation must suffer from my precipitate retreat.

I was convinced and composed by these considerations. I appeared in public with an air of tranquillity, was well received by the best company in town, and, my misfortune taking air, condoled accordingly; while I had the satisfaction of seeing Melinda so universally discountenanced, that she was fain to return to London, in order to avoid the scoffs and censure of the ladies of Bath. But though the hope of hearing from the darling of my soul supported my spirits a little while, I began to be very uneasy, when, at the end of several weeks, I found that expectation disappointed. In short, melancholy and despondence took possession of my soul; and repining at that Providence, which, by acting the stepmother towards me, kept me from the fruition of my wishes, I determined in a fit of despair, to risk all I had at the gaming-table, with a view of acquiring a fortune sufficient to render me independent for life, or of plunging myself into such a state of misery as would

effectually crush every ambitious hope that now tortured my imagination.

Actuated by this fatal resolution, I engaged in play, and, after some turns of fortune, found myself at the end of three days worth a thousand pounds; but it was not my intention to stop here, for which cause I kept Strap ignorant of my success, and continued my career, until I was reduced to five guineas, which I would have hazarded also, had I not been ashamed to fall from a bet of two hundred pounds to such a petty sum.

Having thus executed my scheme, I went home, amazed to find myself so much at ease, and informed my friend Strap of my mischance, with such calmness, that he, imagining I joked, affected to receive the tidings with great equanimity. But both he and I found ourselves mistaken very soon. I had misinterpreted my own stupidity into deliberate resignation; and he had reason to believe me in earnest, when he saw me next morning agitated with the most violent despair, which he endeavoured to alleviate with all the consolation in his power.

In one of my lucid intervals, however, I charged him to take a place in the stage-coach for London, and, in the meantime, pay my debts in Bath, which amounted to thirty shillings only. Without taking leave of my friends, I embarked, Strap having the good fortune to find a return horse, and arrived in town, without having met with anything remarkable on the road. While we crossed Bagshot Heath, I was seized with a sort of inclination to retrieve my fortune, by laying passengers under contribution

in some such place. My thoughts were so circumstanced at this time, that I should have digested the crime of robbery, so righteously had I concerted my plan, and ventured my life in the execution, had I not been deterred by reflecting upon the infamy that attends detection.

The apartment I formerly lived in being unengaged, I took possession of it, and next day went in quest of Banter, who received me with open arms, in expectation of having his bond discharged to his liking. But when he understood what had happened, his countenance changed of a sudden; and he told me, with a dryness of displeasure peculiar to himself, that, if he was in my place, he would put it out of fortune's power to play him such another trick, and be avenged of his own indiscretion at once. When I desired him to explain his meaning, he pointed to his neck, raised himself on his tip-toes, and was going away without any further ceremony, when I put him in mind of my indigence, and demanded the five guineas I had formerly lent him. "Five guineas!" cried he; "Zounds! had you acted with common prudence, you might have had twenty thousand in your pocket by this time. I depended upon five hundred from you, as much as if I had had notes for it in the bank; and by all the rules of equity, you are indebted to me for that sum." I was neither pleased nor convinced by this computation, and insisted on my right with such determined obstinacy, that he was fain to alter his tone, and appease my clamour, by assuring me, that he was not master of five shillings. Society in distress generally promotes

good understanding among people; from being a dun, I descended to be a client, and asked his advice about repairing my losses. He counselled me to have recourse again to the gaming-table, where I succeeded so well before, and put myself in a condition by selling my watch. I followed his directions, and, having accommodated him with a few pieces, went to the place, where I lost every shilling.

Then I returned to my lodgings full of desperate resolution, and, having made Strap acquainted with my fate, ordered him to pawn my sword immediately, that I might be enabled to make another effort. This affectionate creature no sooner understood my purpose, than, seized with insuppressible sorrow at the prospect of my misery, he burst into tears, and asked what I proposed to do, after the small sum he could raise on the sword should be spent? "On my own account," said he, "I am quite unconcerned; for, while God spares me health and these ten fingers, I can earn a comfortable subsistence anywhere; but what must become of you, who have less humility to stoop, and more appetites to gratify?" Here I interrupted him, by saying, with a gloomy aspect, I should never want a resource while I had a loaded pistol in possession. Stupefied with horror at this dreadful insinuation, he stood mute for some time, and then broke out into, "God of his infinite mercy enable you to withstand that temptation of the devil! Consider your immortal soul — there is no repentance in the grave. O Lord! that ever we should come to this. — Are we not enjoined to resign ourselves to the will of Heaven! — where is your patience? *Durum*

patientia frango — you are but a young man — there may be many good things in store for you — *Accidit in puncto, quod non speratur, in anno* — remember your uncle, Mr. Bowling; perhaps he is now on his voyage homeward, pleasing himself with the hopes of seeing and relieving you; nay, peradventure he is already arrived, for the ship was expected about this time." A ray of hope shot athwart my soul at this suggestion; I thanked my friend for his seasonable recollection, and, after having promised to take no resolution till his return, dismissed him to Wapping for intelligence.

In his absence I was visited by Banter, who being informed of my bad luck at play, told me, that fortune would probably be one day weary of persecuting me. "In the meantime," said he, "here is a letter for you, which I received just now enclosed in one from Freeman." I snatched it with eagerness, and knowing the superscription to be of Narcissa's handwriting, kissed it with transport, and, having opened it, read:

"It is with great difficulty that I have stolen from the observation of those spies who are set over me, this opportunity of telling you, that I was suddenly carried away from Bath by my brother, who was informed of our correspondence by Lord Quiverwit, whom, I since understand, you have wounded in a duel on my account. As I am fully convinced of your honour and love, I hope I shall never hear of such desperate proofs of either for the future. I am so strictly watched, that it will be impossible for you to see me, until my brother's suspicions shall abate, or Heaven contrive some other unfore-

seen event in our behalf. In the meantime you may depend on the constancy and affection of

"Your own NARCISSA."

"*P. S.* — Miss Williams, who is my fellow-prisoner, desires to be remembered to you. We are both in good health, and only in pain for you, especially as it will be impracticable for you to convey any message or letter to the place of our confinement; for which reason, pray desist from the attempt, that, by miscarrying, might prolong our captivity.

"N——."

This kind letter afforded me great consolation. I communicated it to Banter, and at the same time showed him her picture. He approved of her beauty and good sense, and could not help owning, that my neglect of Miss Snapper was excusable, when such a fine creature engrossed my attention.

I began to be reconciled to my fate, and imagined that, if I could contrive means of subsisting until my uncle should arrive, in case he was not already at home, he would enable me to do something effectual in behalf of my love and fortune. I therefore consulted Banter about a present supply, who no sooner understood that I had credit with a tailor, than he advised me to take off two or three suits of rich clothes, and convert them into cash, by selling them at half-price to a salesman in Monmouth Street. I was startled at this proposal, which I thought savoured a little of fraud; but he rendered it palatable, by observing, that in a few months I might be in a condition to do everybody justice; and, in the mean-

time, I was acquitted by the honesty of my intention. I suffered myself to be persuaded by his salvo, by which my necessity, rather than my judgment, was convinced; and when I found there were no accounts of the ship in which my uncle embarked, actually put the scheme in practice, and raised by it five and twenty guineas, paying him for his advice with the odd five.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

I AM ARRESTED — CARRIED TO THE MARSHALSEA — FIND MY OLD ACQUAINTANCE BEAU JACKSON IN THAT JAIL — HE INFORMS ME OF HIS ADVENTURES — STRAP ARRIVES, AND WITH DIFFICULTY IS COMFORTED — JACKSON INTRODUCES ME TO A POET — I ADMIRE HIS CONVERSATION AND CAPACITY — AM DEEPLY AFFECTED WITH MY MISFORTUNE — STRAP HIRES HIMSELF AS A JOURNEYMAN BARBER.

BUT this expedient was in a few weeks attended with a consequence I did not foresee; a player having purchased one of the suits which were exposed to sale, appeared in it on the stage one night, while my tailor unfortunately happened to be present. He knew it immediately, and, inquiring minutely into the affair, discovered my whole contrivance; upon which he came to my lodgings, and, telling me that he was very much straitened for want of money, presented his bill, which amounted to fifty pounds. Surprised at this unexpected address, I affected to treat him cavalierly, swore some oaths, asked if he doubted my honour, and, telling him I should take care whom I dealt with for the future, bade him come again in three days. He obeyed me punctually, demanded his money, and, finding himself amused with bare promises, arrested me that very day in the

street. I was not much shocked at this adventure, which, indeed, put an end to a state of horrible expectation; but I refused to go to a spunging-house, where I heard there was nothing but the most flagrant imposition; and a coach being called, was carried to the Marshalsea, attended by a bailiff and his follower, who were very much disappointed and chagrined at my resolution.

The turnkey, guessing from my appearance that I had money in my pocket, received me with the repetition of the Latin word *depone*, and gave me to understand, that I must pay beforehand for the apartment I should choose to dwell in. I desired to see his conveniencies, and hired a small paltry bedchamber for a crown a week, which, in any other place, would have let for half the money. Having taken possession of this dismal habitation, I sent for Strap, and my thoughts were busied in collecting matter of consolation to that faithful squire, when somebody knocked at my door, which I no sooner opened, than a young fellow entered, in very shabby clothes, and marvellous foul linen. After a low bow, he called me by my name, and asked if I had forgot him. His voice assisted me in recollecting his person, whom I soon recognised to be my old acquaintance Jackson, of whom mention is made in the first part of my memoirs. I saluted him cordially, expressed my satisfaction of finding him alive, and condoled him on his present situation, which, however, did not seem to affect him much, for he laughed very heartily at the occasion of our meeting so unexpectedly in this place.

Our mutual compliments being past, I inquired

about his amour with the lady of fortune, which seemed to be so near a happy conclusion when I had the pleasure of seeing him last; and, after an immoderate fit of laughter, he gave me to understand, that he had been egregiously bit in that affair. "You must know," said he, "that a few days after our adventure with the bawd and her b—ches, I found means to be married to that same fine lady you speak of, and passed the night with her at her lodgings, so much to her satisfaction, that early in the morning, after a good deal of snivelling and sobbing, she owned, that, far from being an heiress of great fortune, she was no other than a common woman of the town, who had decoyed me into matrimony, in order to enjoy the privilege of a *femme couverte;* and that, unless I made my escape immediately, I should be arrested for a debt of her contracting, by bailiffs employed and instructed for that purpose. Startled at this intimation, I rose in a twinkling, and taking leave of my spouse with several hearty d—ns, got safe into the verge of the court, where I kept snug until I was appointed surgeon's mate of a man-of-war at Portsmouth; for which place I set out on Sunday, went on board of my ship, in which I sailed to the Straits, where I had the good fortune to be made surgeon of a sloop that came home a few months after, and was put out of commission; whereupon I came to London, imagining myself forgotten, and freed from my wife and her creditors; but had not been in town a week before I was arrested for a debt of her's, amounting to twenty pounds, and brought to this place, where I have

been fixed by another action since that time. However, you know my disposition; I defy care and anxiety; and, being on the half-pay list, make shift to live here tolerably easy." I congratulated him on his philosophy, and remembering that I was in his debt, repaid the money he formerly lent me, which, I believe, was far from being unseasonable. I then inquired about the economy of the place, which he explained to my satisfaction; and after we had agreed to mess together, he was just going to give orders for dinner, when Strap arrived.

I never in my life saw sorrow so extravagantly expressed in any countenance as in that of my honest friend, which was, indeed, particularly adapted by nature for such impressions. When we were left by ourselves, I communicated to him my disaster, and endeavoured to console him with the same arguments he had formerly used to me, withal representing the fair chance I had of being relieved in a short time by Mr. Bowling. But his grief was unutterable; he seemed to give attention without listening, and wrung his hands in silence; so that I was in a fair way of being infected by his behaviour, when Jackson returned, and perceiving the deference I paid to Strap, although in a footman's habit, distributed his crumbs of comfort with such mirth, jollity, and unconcern, that the features of the distressed squire relaxed by degrees; he recovered the use of speech, and began to be a little more reconciled to this lamentable event. We dined together on boiled beef and greens, brought from a cook's shop in the neighbourhood; and although this meal was served up in a manner little

corresponding with the sphere of life in which I had lately lived, I made a virtue of necessity, ate with good appetite, and treated my friends with a bottle of wine, which had the desired effect of increasing the good-humour of my fellow-prisoner, and exhilarating the spirits of Strap, who now talked cavalierly of my misfortune.

After dinner, Jackson left us to our private affairs; when I desired my friend to pack up all our things and carry them to some cheap lodging he should choose for himself in the neighbourhood of the Marshalsea, after he had discharged my lodging, for which purpose I gave him money. I likewise recommended to him the keeping my misfortune secret, and saying to my landlord, or any other who should inquire for me, that I was gone into the country for a few weeks; at the same time I laid strong injunctions upon him to call every second day upon Banter, in case he should receive any letter for me from Narcissa, by the channel of Freeman; and by all means to leave a direction for himself, at my uncle's lodgings in Wapping, by which I might be found when my kinsman should arrive.

When he departed to execute these orders, which, by the bye, were punctually performed that very night, I found myself so little seasoned to my situation, that I dreaded reflection, and sought shelter from it in the company of the beau, who, promising to regale me with a lecture upon taste, conducted me to the common side, where I saw a number of naked miserable wretches assembled together. We had not been here many minutes, when a figure

appeared, wrapt in a dirty rug, tied about his loins with two pieces of list, of different colours, knotted together; having a black bushy beard, and his head covered with a huge mass of brown periwig, which seemed to have been ravished from the head of some scarecrow. This apparition, stalking in with great solemnity, made a profound bow to the audience, who signified their approbation by a general response of "How d' ye do, doctor?" He then turned towards us, and honoured Jackson with a particular salutation. Upon which my friend, in a formal manner, introduced him to me, by the name of Mr. Melopoyn. This ceremony being over, he advanced into the middle of the congregation, which crowded around him, and hemming three times, to my utter astonishment, pronounced, with great significance of voice and gesture, a very elegant and ingenious discourse upon the difference between genius and taste, illustrating his assertions with apt quotations from the best authors, ancient as well as modern. When he had finished his harangue, which lasted a full hour, he bowed again to the spectators, not one of whom, I am informed, understood so much as a sentence of what he had uttered. They manifested, however, their admiration and esteem by a voluntary contribution, which, Jackson told me, one week with another, amounted to eighteen pence. This moderate stipend, together with some small presents that he received for making up differences, and deciding causes amongst the prisoners, just enabled him to breathe and walk about, in the grotesque figure I have described. I understood, also, that he was an excellent poet, and

had composed a tragedy, which was allowed by everybody who had seen it to be a performance of great merit; that his learning was infinite, his morals unexceptionable, and his modesty invincible.

Such a character could not fail of attracting my regard; I longed impatiently to be acquainted with him, and desired Jackson would engage him to spend the evening in my apartment. My request was granted, he favoured us with his company, and in the course of our conversation, perceiving that I had a strong passion for the *Belles-Lettres*, acquitted himself so well on that subject, that I expressed a fervent desire of seeing his productions. In this point, too, he gratified my inclination; he promised to bring his tragedy to my room next day, and in the meantime entertained me with some detached pieces, which gave me a very advantageous idea of his poetical talent. Among other things, I was particularly pleased with some elegies, in imitation of Tibullus; one of which I beg leave to submit to the reader, as a specimen of his complexion and capacity.

Where now are all my flattering dreams of joy?
Monimia, give my soul her wonted rest:—
Since first thy beauty fix'd my roving eye,
Heart-gnawing cares corrode my pensive breast!

Let happy lovers fly where pleasures call,
With festive songs beguile the fleeting hour;
Lead Beauty through the mazes of the ball,
Or press her wanton in Love's roseate bower.

For me, no more I 'll range th' empurpled mead,
Where shepherds pipe, and virgins dance around;
Nor wander through the woodbine's fragrant shade,
To hear the music of the grove resound.

MELOPOYN'S ELEGY

I 'll seek some lonely church, or dreary hall,
Where fancy paints the glimm'ring taper blue,
Where damps hang mould'ring on the ivy'd wall,
And sheeted ghosts drink up the midnight dew.

There, leagu'd with hopeless anguish and despair,
Awhile in silence o'er my fate repine:
Then, with a long farewell to love and care,
To kindred dust my weary limbs consign.

Wilt thou, Monimia, shed a gracious tear
On the cold grave where all my sorrows rest;
Strew vernal flowers, applaud my love sincere,
And bid the turf lie easy on my breast?

I was wonderfully affected with this pathetic complaint, which seemed so well calculated for my own disappointment in love, that I could not help attaching the idea of Narcissa to the name of Monimia, and of forming such melancholy presages of my passion, that I could not recover my tranquillity, and was fain to have recourse to the bottle, which prepared me for a profound sleep, that I could not otherwise have enjoyed. Whether these impressions invited and introduced a train of other melancholy reflections, or my fortitude was all exhausted in the effort I made against despondence, during the first day of my imprisonment, I cannot determine; but I awoke in the horrors, and found my imagination haunted with such dismal apparitions, that I was ready to despair; and I believe the reader will own, I had no great cause to congratulate myself, when I considered my situation. I was interrupted in the midst of these gloomy apprehensions by the arrival of Strap, who contributed not a little to the re-establishment of my peace, by

letting me know that he had hired himself as a journeyman barber; by which means he would be able not only to save me a considerable expense, but even make shift to lay up something for my subsistence after my money should be spent, in case I should not be relieved before.

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

I READ MELOPOYN'S TRAGEDY, AND CONCEIVE A VAST OPINION OF HIS GENIUS — HE RECOUNTS HIS ADVENTURES.

WHILE we ate our breakfast together, I made him acquainted with the character and condition of the poet, who came in with his play at that instant, and imagining we were engaged about business, could not be prevailed upon to sit; but, leaving his performance, went away. My friend's tender heart was melted at the sight of a gentleman and Christian (for he had a great veneration for both these epithets) in such misery; and assented, with great cheerfulness, to a proposal I made of clothing him with our superfluities; a task with which he charged himself, and departed immediately to perform it.

He was no sooner gone, than I locked my door, and sat down to the tragedy, which I read to the end with vast pleasure, not a little amazed at the conduct of the managers who had rejected it. The fable, in my opinion, was well chosen, and naturally conducted; the incidents interesting, the characters beautifully contrasted, strongly marked, and well supported; the diction poetical, spirited, and correct; the unities of the drama maintained with the most scrupulous ex-

actness; the opening gradual and engaging, the *peripeteia* surprising, and the catastrophe affecting. In short, I judged it by the laws of Aristotle and Horace, and could find nothing in it exceptionable, but a little too much embellishment in some few places, which objection he removed to my satisfaction, by a quotation from Aristotle's *Poetics*, importing, that the least interesting parts of a poem ought to be raised and dignified by the charms and energy of diction.

I revered his genius, and was seized with an eager curiosity to know the particular events of a fortune so unworthy of his merit. At that instant Strap returned with a bundle of clothes, which I sent with my compliments to Mr. Melopoyn, as a small token of my regard, and desired the favour of his company to dinner. He accepted my present and invitation, and in less than half an hour made his appearance in a decent dress, which altered his figure very much to his advantage. I perceived, by his countenance, that his heart was big with gratitude, and endeavoured to prevent his acknowledgments, by asking pardon for the liberty I had taken; he made no reply, but, with an aspect full of admiration and esteem, bowed to the ground, while the tears gushed from his eyes. Affected with these symptoms of an ingenuous mind, I shifted the conversation, and complimented him on his performance, which, I assured him, afforded me infinite pleasure. My approbation made him happy; dinner being served, and Jackson arrived, I begged their permission for Strap to sit at table with us, after having informed them, that he was a person to whom I was extremely obliged; they were

kind enough to grant that favour, and we ate together with great harmony and satisfaction.

Our meal being ended, I expressed my wonder at the little regard Mr. Melopoyn had met with from the world; and signified a desire of hearing how he had been treated by the managers of the playhouses, to whom I understood from Jackson he had offered his tragedy without success. "There is so little entertaining in the incidents of my life," said he, "that I am sure the recital will not recompense your attention; but, since you discover an inclination to know them, I understand my duty too well to disappoint your desire.

"My father, who was a curate in the country, being, by the narrowness of his circumstances, hindered from maintaining me at the university, took the charge of my education upon himself, and laboured with such industry and concern in the undertaking, that I had little cause to regret the want of public masters. Being at great pains to consult my natural bias, he discovered in me, betimes, an inclination for poetry; upon which he recommended me to an intimate acquaintance with the classics, in the cultivation of which he assisted me with paternal zeal and uncommon erudition. When he thought me sufficiently acquainted with the ancients, he directed my studies to the best modern authors, French and Italian, as well as English, and laid a particular injunction upon me to make myself master of my mother tongue.

"About the age of eighteen, I grew ambitious of undertaking a work of some consequence; and, with

my father's approbation, actually planned the tragedy you have read; but, before I had finished four acts, that indulgent parent died, and left my mother and me in very indigent circumstances. A near relation, compassionating our distress, took us into his family, where I brought my fable to a conclusion; and soon after that period my mother quitted this life. When my sorrow for this melancholy event had subsided, I told my kinsman, who was a farmer, that, having paid my last duty to my parent, I had now no attachment to detain me in the country, and therefore was resolved to set out for London, and offer my play to the stage, where I did not doubt of acquiring a large share of fame as well as fortune; in which case I should not be unmindful of my friends and benefactors. My cousin was ravished with the prospect of my felicity, and willingly contributed towards the expense of fitting me out for my expedition.

"Accordingly I took a place in the waggon, and arrived in town, where I hired an apartment in a garret, willing to live as frugal as possible, until I should know what I had to expect from the manager, to whom I intended to offer my play; for, though I looked upon myself as perfectly secure of a good reception, imagining that a patentee would be as eager to receive, as I to present my production, I did not know whether or not he might be pre-engaged in favour of another author, a circumstance that would certainly retard my success. On this consideration, too, I determined to be speedy in my application, and even to wait upon one of the managers the very next day. For this purpose, I inquired of my

landlord, if he knew where either or both of them lived; and he, being curious to know my business, and at the same time appearing to be a very honest friendly man (a tallow-chandler), I made him acquainted with my design; upon which he told me that I went the wrong way to work; that I would not find such easy access to a manager as I imagined; and that, if I delivered my performance without proper recommendation, it would be as one to a thousand if ever it should be minded. 'Take my advice,' said he, 'and your business is done. One of the patentees is a good Catholic, as I am, and uses the same father who confesses me. I will make you acquainted with this good priest, who is an excellent scholar, and if he should approve of your play, his recommendation will go a great way in determining Mr. Supple to bring it on the stage.'

"I applauded his expedient, and was introduced to the friar, who, having perused the tragedy, was pleased to signify his approbation, and commended me, in particular, for having avoided all reflections upon religion. He promised to use all his influence with his son Supple in my behalf, and to inform himself that very day at what time it would be proper for me to wait upon him with the piece. He was punctual in performing his engagement, and next morning gave me to understand that he had mentioned my affair to the manager, and that I had no more to do than to go to his house any time in the forenoon, and make use of his name, upon which I should find immediate admittance. I took this advice, put my performance in my bosom, and, having

heartily sorry for an accident that has happened during my illness. You must know that my eldest boy, finding your manuscript upon the table in the dining-room, where I used to read it, carried it into the kitchen, and leaving it there, a negligent wench of a cook-maid, mistaking it for waste paper, has expended it all but a few leaves in singeing fowls upon the spit. But I hope the misfortune is not irreparable, since, no doubt, you have several copies.'

"I protest to you, my good friend, Mr. Random, I was extremely shocked at this information; but the good-natured gentleman seemed to be so much affected with my misfortune, that I suppressed my concern, and told him, that although I had not another copy, I should be able to retrieve the loss by writing another from my memory, which was very tenacious. You cannot imagine how well pleased Mr. Supple was at this assurance; he begged I would set about it immediately, and carefully revolve and recollect every circumstance, before I pretended to commit it to paper, that it might be the same individual play that he had perused. Encouraged by this injunction, which plainly demonstrated how much he interested himself in the affair, I taxed my remembrance and industry, and in three weeks produced the exact image of the former, which was conveyed to him by my good friend, Father O'Varnish, who told me next day that Mr. Supple would revise it superficially, in order to judge of its sameness with the other, and then give his final answer. For this examination I allotted a week; and in full confidence of seeing it acted in a little while, demanded an audience of the

manager, when that term was expired. But alas! the season had slipped away insensibly; he convinced me, that, if my play had been put into rehearsal at that time, it could not have been ready for performing until the end of March, when the benefit nights came on; consequently it would have interfered with the interest of the players, whom it was not my business to disoblige.

"I was fain to acquiesce in these reasons, which to be sure were extremely just, and to reserve my performance for the next season, when he hoped I would not be so unlucky: although it was a grievous disappointment to me, who by this time began to want both money and necessaries; having, on the strength of my expectation from the theatre, launched out into some extravagances, by which the sum I brought to town was already almost consumed. Indeed, I ought to be ashamed at this circumstance of my conduct; for my finances were sufficient, with good economy, to have maintained me comfortably a whole year. You will perhaps be amazed when I tell you, that in six months I expended not a farthing less than ten guineas: but when one considers the temptations to which a young man is exposed in this great city, especially if he is addicted to pleasure, as I am, the wonder will vanish, or at least abate. Nor was the cause of my concern limited to my own situation entirely: I had writ an account of my good reception to my kinsman the farmer, and desired him to depend upon me for the money he had kindly accommodated me with about the end of February; which promise I now found myself unable to perform. However, there was

no remedy but patience. I applied to my landlord, who was a very good-natured man, candidly owned my distress, and begged his advice in laying down some plan for my subsistence. He readily promised to consult his confessor on this subject, and told me, I was welcome, in the meantime, to lodge and board with him, until fortune should put it in my power to make restitution.

"Mr. O'Varnish, being informed of my necessity, offered to introduce me to the author of a weekly paper, who, he did not doubt, would employ me in that way, provided he should find me duly qualified; but, upon inquiry, I understood that this journal was calculated to foment divisions in the commonwealth, and therefore I desired to be excused from engaging in it. He then proposed that I should write something in the poetical way, which I might dispose of to a bookseller for a pretty sum of ready money, and perhaps establish my own character into the bargain; this event would infallibly procure friends, and my tragedy would appear next season to the best advantage, by being supported both by interest and reputation. I was charmed with this prospect, and, having heard what friends Mr. Pope acquired by his pastorals, set about a work of that kind, and in less than six weeks, composed as many eclogues, which I forthwith offered to an eminent bookseller, who desired me to leave them for his perusal, and he would give me an answer in two days. At the end of that time, I went to him, when he returned the poems, telling me, they would not answer his purpose, and sweetened his refusal by saying there were some good clever lines

in them. Not a little dejected at this rebuff, which I learned from Mr. O'Varnish was owing to the opinion of another author, whom this bookseller always consulted on these occasions, I applied to another person of the same profession who told me the town was cloyed with pastorals, and advised me, if I intended to profit by my talents, to write something satirical or luscious, such as *The Button Hole*, *Shockey and Towzer*, *The Leaky Vessel*, etc. — and yet this was a man in years, who wore a reverend periwig, looked like a senator, and went regularly to church. Be that as it will, I scorned to prostitute my pen in the manner he proposed, and carried my papers to a third, who assured me, that poetry was entirely out of his way; and asked if I had got never a piece of secret history, thrown into a series of letters, or a volume of adventures, such as those of Robinson Crusoe and Colonel Jack, or a collection of conundrums, wherewith to entertain the plantations? Being quite unfurnished for this dealer, I had recourse to another with as little success; and I verily believe was rejected by the whole trade.

"I was afterwards persuaded to offer myself as a translator, and accordingly repaired to a person, who was said to entertain numbers of that class in his pay; he assured me he had already a great deal of that work on his hands, which he did not know what to do with; observed that translation was a mere drug, that branch of literature being overstocked with an inundation of authors from North Britain; and asked what I would expect per sheet, for rendering the Latin classics into English. That I might not make

myself too cheap, I determined to set a high price upon my qualifications, and demanded half a guinea for every translated sheet. 'Half a guinea!' cried he, staring at me, then paused a little, and said, 'he had no occasion for my service at present.' I found my error, and, resolving to make amends, fell one half in my demand; upon which he stared at me again, and told me his hands were full. I attempted others, without finding employment, and was actually reduced to a very uncomfortable prospect, when I bethought myself of offering my talents to the printers of halfpenny ballads, and other such occasional essays as are hawked about the streets. With this view, I applied to one of the most noted and vociferous of this tribe, who directed me to a person whom I found entertaining a whole crowd of them with gin, bread, and cheese; he carried me into a little back parlour, very neatly furnished, where I signified my desire of being enrolled among his writers; and was asked what kind of composition I professed? understanding that my inclination leaned towards poetry, he expressed his satisfaction, telling me one of his poets had lost his senses, and was confined in Bedlam, and the other was become dozed with drinking drams; so that he had not done anything tolerable these many weeks. When I proposed that we should enter into terms of agreement, he gave me to understand, that his bargains were always conditional, and his authors paid in proportion to the sale of their works.

"Having therefore settled these conditions, which, I do assure you, were not very advantageous to me,

he assigned me a subject for a ballad, which was to be finished in two hours; and I returned to my garret in order to perform his injunction. As the theme happened to suit my fancy, I completed a pretty sort of an ode within the time prescribed, and brought it to him big with hope of profit and applause. He read it in a twinkling, and, to my utter astonishment, told me, it would not do, though indeed he owned I wrote a good hand, and spelled very well, but my language was too high-flown, and of consequence not at all adapted to the capacity and taste of his customers. I promised to rectify that mistake, and in half an hour humbled my style to the comprehension of vulgar readers; he approved of the alteration, and gave me some hopes of succeeding in time, though he observed, that my performance was very deficient in the quaintness of expression that pleases the multitude; however, to encourage me, he ventured the expense of printing and paper, and, if I remember aright, my share of the sale amounted to fourpence halfpenny.

"From that day I studied the Grub Street manner with great diligence, and at length became such a proficient, that my works were in great request among the most polite of the chairmen, draymen, hackney coachmen, footmen, and servant-maids. Nay, I have enjoyed the pleasure of seeing my productions adorned with cuts, pasted upon the wall as ornaments in beer cellars and cobblers' stalls, and have actually heard them sung in clubs of substantial tradesmen. But empty praise, you know, my dear friend, will not supply the cravings of nature. I

found myself in danger of starving in the midst of all my fame; for of ten songs I composed, it was well if two had the good fortune to please. For this reason I turned my thoughts to prose, and, during a tract of gloomy weather, published an apparition, on the substance of which I subsisted very comfortably a whole month; I have made many a good meal upon a monster; a rape has often afforded me great satisfaction; but a murder, well timed, was my never-failing resource. What then? I was a most miserable slave to my employers, who expected to be furnished at a minute's warning with prose and verse, just as they thought the circumstances of the times required, whether the inclination was absent or present. Upon my sincerity, Mr. Random, I have been so much pestered and besieged by those children of clamour, that life became a burden to me."

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

THE CONTINUATION AND CONCLUSION OF MR. MELOPOYN'S STORY

"I MADE shift, notwithstanding, to maintain myself till the beginning of next winter, when I renewed my addresses to my friend Mr. Supple, and was most graciously received. 'I have been thinking of your affair, Mr. Melopoyn,' said he, 'and am determined to show how far I have your interest at heart, by introducing you to a young nobleman, of my acquaintance, who is remarkable for his fine taste in dramatic writings, and is, besides, a man of such influence, that, if once he should approve of your play, his patronage will support it against all the efforts of envy and ignorance: for I do assure you that merit alone will not bring success. I have already spoke of your performance to Lord Rattle, and if you will call at my house in a day or two, you shall have a letter of introduction to his lordship.' I was sensibly touched with this mark of Mr. Supple's friendship, and looking upon my affair as already done, went home and imparted my good fortune to my landlord, who, to render my appearance more acceptable to my patron, procured a suit of new clothes for me on his own credit.

"Not to trouble you with idle particulars, I carried my tragedy to his lordship's lodgings, and sent it up, along with Mr. Supple's letter, by one of his servants, who desired me, by his lord's order, to return in a week. I did so, and was admitted to his lordship, who received me very courteously, told me he had perused my play, which he thought, on the whole, was the best *coup d'essai* he had ever seen; but that he had marked some places in the margin, which he imagined might be altered for the better. I was transported with this reception, and promised, with many acknowledgments of his lordship's generosity, to be governed solely by his advice and direction. 'Well then,' said he, 'write another fair copy with the alterations I have proposed, and bring it to me as soon as possible; for I am resolved to have it brought on the stage this winter.' You may be sure I set about this task with alacrity; and though I found his lordship's remarks much more numerous, and of less importance, than I expected, I thought it was not my interest to dispute upon trifles with my patron; therefore new modelled it, according to his desire, in less than a month.

"When I waited upon him with the manuscript, I found one of the actors at breakfast with his lordship, who immediately introduced him to my acquaintance, and desired him to read a scene of my play. This task he performed very much to my satisfaction, with regard to emphasis and pronunciation; but he signified his disgust at several words in every page, which I presuming to defend, Lord Rattle told me, with a peremptory look, I must not pretend to dis-

pute with him, who had been a player these twenty years, and understood the economy of the stage better than any man living. I was forced to submit, and his lordship proposed the same actor should read the whole play in the evening before some gentlemen of his acquaintance, whom he would convene at his lodgings for that purpose.

"I was present at the reading; and I protest to you, my dear friend, I never underwent such a severe trial in the whole course of my life as at that juncture; for although the player might be a very honest man, and a good performer, he was excessively illiterate and assuming, and made a thousand frivolous objections, which I was not permitted to answer. However, the piece was very much applauded on the whole; the gentlemen present, who, I understood, were men of fortune, promised to countenance and support it as much as they could; and Lord Rattle assuring me that he would act the part of a careful nurse to it, desired me to carry it home, and alter it immediately according to their remarks. I was fain to acquiesce in his determination, and fulfilled his injunctions with all the expedition in my power: but before I could present the new copy, my good friend Mr. Supple had disposed of his property and patent to one Mr. Brayer; so that fresh interest was to be made with the new manager. This task Lord Rattle undertook, having some acquaintance with him, and recommended my performance so strongly that it was received.

"I looked upon myself now as upon the eve of reaping the fruits of all my labour. I waited a few

days in expectation of its being put into rehearsal, and wondering at the delay, applied to my worthy patron, who excused Mr. Brayer, on account of the multiplicity of business in which he was involved, and bade me beware of teasing the patentee. I treasured up this caution, and exerted my patience three weeks longer; at the end of which his lordship gave me to understand that Mr. Brayer had read my play, and owned it had indubitable merit; but, as he had long been pre-engaged to another author, he could not possibly represent it that season; though, if I would reserve it for the next, and, in the interim, make such alterations as he had proposed by observations on the margin, I might depend upon his compliance.

"Thunderstruck at this disappointment, I could not, for some minutes, utter one syllable. At length, however, I complained bitterly of the manager's insincerity in amusing me so long, when he knew from the beginning that he could not gratify my desire. But his lordship reprimanded me for my freedom, said Mr. Brayer was a man of honour, and imputed his behaviour with respect to me to nothing else but forgetfulness. And indeed I have had some reason, since that time, to be convinced of his bad memory; for, in spite of appearances, I will not allow myself to interpret his conduct any other way. Lord Rattle, observing me very much affected with my disappointment, offered his interest to bring on my play at the other house, which I eagerly accepting, he forthwith wrote a letter of recommendation to Mr. Bellower, actor, and prime minister to Mr. Vandal, proprietor of that theatre; and desired me

to deliver it with my tragedy without loss of time. Accordingly, I hastened to his house, where, after having waited a whole hour in a lobby, I was admitted to his presence, and my performance received with great state. He told me he was extremely busy at present, but he would peruse it as soon as possible, and bade me call again in a week. I took my leave not a little astonished at the port and supercilious behaviour of this stage-player, who had not treated me with good manners; and began to think the dignity of a poet greatly impaired since the days of Euripides and Sophocles; but all this was nothing in comparison to what I have since observed.

"Well, Mr. Random, I went back at the appointed time, and was told that Mr. Bellower was engaged, and could not see me. I repeated my visit a few days after, and, having waited a considerable time, was favoured with an audience, during which he said he had not as yet read my play. Nettled at this usage, I could contain myself no longer, but telling him, I imagined he would have paid more deference to Lord Rattle's recommendation, demanded my manuscript with some expressions of resentment. 'Ay,' said he, in a theatrical tone, 'with all my heart.' Then pulling out a drawer of the bureau at which he sat, he took out a bundle, and threw it upon a table that was near him, pronouncing the word, 'There,' with great disdain. I took it up, and perceiving, with some surprise, that it was a comedy, told him it did not belong to me; upon which he offered me another, which I also disclaimed. A third was produced, and rejected for the same reason. At length he pulled

out a whole handful, and spread them before me, saying, 'There are seven — take which you please — or take them all.' I singled out my own, and went away, struck dumb with admiration at what I had seen — not so much on account of his insolence, as of the number of new plays, which from this circumstance I concluded were yearly offered to the stage. You may be sure, I did not fail to carry my complaint to my patron, who did not receive it with all the indignation I expected; but taxed me with precipitation, and told me I must lay my account with bearing the humours of the players, if I intended to write for the stage. 'There is now no other remedy,' said he, 'but to keep it till the next season for Mr. Brayer, and alter it at your leisure, in the summer, according to his directions.' I was now reduced to a terrible alternative, either to quit all hopes of my tragedy, from which I had all along promised myself a large share of fortune and reputation, or to encounter eight long months of adversity in preparing for, and expecting its appearance. This last penance, painful as it was, seemed most eligible to my reflection at that time, and therefore I resolved to undergo it.

"Why should I tire you with particulars of no consequence? I wrestled with extreme poverty until the time of my probation was expired; and went to my Lord Rattle, in order to remind him of my affair, when I understood, to my great concern, that his lordship was just on the point of going abroad, and, which was still more unfortunate for me, Mr. Brayer had gone into the country, so that my generous patron had it not in his power to introduce me personally,

as he intended. However, he wrote a very strong letter to the manager in my favour, and put him in mind of the promise he had made in behalf of my play.

"As soon as I was certified of Brayer's return, I went to his house with this letter, but was told he was gone out. I called again next day early in the morning, received the same answer, and was desired to leave my name and business; I did so, and returned the day after, when the servant still affirmed that his master was gone abroad, though I perceived him, as I retired, observing me through a window. Incensed at this discovery, I went to a coffee-house hard by, and enclosing his lordship's letter in one from myself, demanded a categorical answer. I sent it to his house, by a porter, who returned in a few minutes, and told me Mr. Brayer would be glad to see me at that instant. I obeyed the summons, and was received with such profusion of compliments and apologies, that my resentment immediately subsided, and I was even in pain for the concern which this honest man showed at the mistake of his servant, who, it seems, had been ordered to deny him to everybody but me. He expressed the utmost veneration for his good and noble friend Lord Rattle, whom he should be always proud to serve; promised to peruse the play with all despatch, and give me a meeting upon it; and, as a testimony of his esteem, made me a present of a general order for the season, by which I should be admitted to any part of the theatre.

"This was a very agreeable compliment to me, whose greatest pleasure consisted in seeing dramatic

performances; and you need not doubt that I often availed myself of my privilege. As I had an opportunity of being behind the scenes when I pleased, I frequently conversed with Mr. Brayer about my play, and asked when he intended to put it into rehearsal; but he had always so much business upon his hands, that it remained with him unopened a considerable while; and I became very uneasy about the season, that wasted apace, when I saw in the papers another new play advertised, which had been written, offered, accepted, and rehearsed in the compass of three months. You may easily guess how much I was confounded at this event. I own to you, that, in the first transports of my anger, I suspected Mr. Brayer of having acted towards me in the most pitiful perfidious manner; and was actually glad at his disappointment in the success of his favourite piece, which, by the strength of art, lingered till the third night, and then died in a deplorable manner. But, now that passion has no share in my reflection, I am willing to ascribe his behaviour to his want of memory or want of judgment, which, you know, are natural defects, that are more worthy of compassion than reproach.

"About this time I happened to be in company with a gentlewoman, who, having heard of my tragedy, told me, she was acquainted with the wife of a gentleman, who was very well known to a lady, who had great interest with a person who was intimate with Earl Sheerwit, and that, if I pleased, she would use her influence in my behalf. As this nobleman had the character of a Mæcenas in the nation, and

could stamp a value upon any work by his sole countenance and approbation, I accepted her offer with eagerness, in full confidence of seeing my reputation established, and my wishes fulfilled in a very short time, provided that I should have the good fortune to please his lordship's taste. I withdrew the manuscript from the hands of Mr. Brayer, and committed it to the care of this gentlewoman, who laboured so effectually in my interest, that in less than a month it was conveyed to the earl, and, in a few weeks after, I had the satisfaction to hear that he had read and approved it very much. Transported with this piece of intelligence, I flattered myself with the hopes of his interesting himself in its favour; but hearing no more of this matter in three whole months, I began — God forgive me! — to suspect the veracity of the person who brought me the good tidings; for I thought it impossible that a man of his rank and character, who knew the difficulty of writing a good tragedy, and understood the dignity of the work, should read and applaud an essay of this kind, without feeling an inclination to befriend the author, whom his countenance alone could raise above dependence. But it was not long before I found my friend very much wronged by my opinion.

"You must know that the civilities I had received from Lord Rattle, and the desire he manifested to promote the success of my play, encouraged me to write an account of my bad fortune to his lordship, who condescended so far as to desire, by letter, a young squire of a great estate, with whom he was intimate, to espouse my cause, and, in particular, make

me acquainted with one Mr. Marmozet, a celebrated player, who had lately appeared on the stage with astonishing éclat, and bore such sway in the house where he acted, that the managers durst not refuse anything he recommended. The young gentleman whom Lord Rattle had employed for this purpose, being diffident of his own interest with Mr. Marmozet, had recourse to a nobleman of his acquaintance, who, at his solicitation, was so good as to introduce me to him; and the conversation turning upon my performance, I was not a little surprised, as well as pleased, to hear that Earl Sheerwit had spoken very much in its praise, and even sent Mr. Marmozet the copy, with a message expressing a desire that he would act in it next season. Nor was the favourite actor backward in commending the piece, which he mentioned with some expressions of regard, that I do not choose to repeat; assuring me that he would appear in it, provided he should be engaged to play at all during the ensuing season. In the meantime, he desired I would give him leave to peruse it in the country, whither he intended to remove next day, that he might have leisure to consider and point out such alterations as might, perhaps, be necessary for its representation; and took my direction, that he might communicate by letter the observations he should make.

"Trusting to these assurances, and the interest which had been made in my behalf, I hugged myself in the expectation of seeing it not only acted, but acted to the greatest advantage; and this I thought could not fail of recompensing me in an ample

manner for the anxiety and affliction I had undergone. But six weeks being elapsed, I did not know how to reconcile Mr. Marmozet's silence with his promise of writing to me in ten days after he set out for the country; however, I was at last favoured with a letter, importing that he had made some remarks on my tragedy, which he would freely impart at meeting, and advising me to put it, without loss of time, into the hands of that manager who had the best company, as he himself was quite uncertain whether or not he should be engaged that winter. I was a good deal alarmed at this last part of his letter, and advised about it with a friend, who told me, it was a plain indication of Mr. Marmozet's desire to get rid of his promise; that his pretended uncertainty about acting next winter was no other than a scandalous evasion; for, to his certain knowledge, he was already engaged, or at least in terms with Mr. Vandal; and that his design was to disappoint me, in favour of a new comedy, which he had purchased of the author, and intended to bring upon the stage for his own advantage. In short, my dear sir, this person, who, I must own, is of a sanguine complexion, handled the moral character of Mr. Marmozet with such severity, that I began to suspect him of some particular prejudice, and put myself upon my guard against his insinuations. I ought to crave pardon for this tedious narration of trivial circumstances, which, however interesting they may be to me, must certainly be very dry and insipid to the ear of one unconcerned in the affair. But I understand the meaning of your looks, and will proceed.

"Well, sir, Mr. Marmozet, upon his return to town, treated me with uncommon complaisance, and invited me to his lodgings, where he proposed to communicate his remarks, which I confess were more unfavourable than I expected; but I answered his objections, and, as I thought, brought him over to my opinion; for, on the whole, he signified the highest approbation of the performance. In the course of our dispute, I was not a little surprised to find this poor gentleman's memory so treacherous, as to let him forget what he had said to me, before he went out of town, in regard to Earl Sheerwit's opinion of my play, which he now professed himself ignorant of; and I was extremely mortified at hearing from his own mouth, that his interest with Mr. Vandal was so very low, as to be insufficient of itself to bring a new piece upon the stage. I then begged his advice; and he counselled me to apply to Earl Sheerwit for a message in my favour to the manager, who would not presume to refuse anything recommended by so great a man; and he was so kind as to promise to second this message with all his power. I had immediate recourse to the worthy gentlewoman, my friend already mentioned, which opened the channels of her conveyance with such expedition, that in a few days I had the promise of the message, provided I could assure myself of Mr. Vandal's being unengaged to any other author; for his lordship did not choose to condescend so far, until he should understand that there was a probability (at least) of succeeding; at the same time that blessed me with this piece of news, I was startled at another, by the same channel of com-

munication; which was, that Mr. Marmozet, before he advised me to this application, had informed the earl, that he had read my play, and found it altogether unfit for the stage.

"Though I could not doubt the certainty of this intelligence, I believed there was some misapprehension in the case; and without taking any notice of it, told Mr. Marmozet the answer I had been favoured with; and he promised to ask Mr. Vandal the question proposed. I waited upon him in a day or two, when he gave me to understand that Mr. Vandal, having professed himself free of all engagements, he had put my play into his hands, and represented it as a piece strongly recommended by Earl Sheerwit, who, he assured him, would honour him with a message in its favour; and he desired me to call for an answer at Mr. Vandal's house in three days. I followed his directions, and found the manager, who, being made acquainted with my business, owned that Mr. Marmozet had given him a manuscript play, but denied that he had mentioned Earl Sheerwit's name. When I informed him of the circumstances of the affair, he said he had no engagement with any author; that he would read my tragedy forthwith, and did not believe he should venture to reject it in contradiction to his lordship's opinion, for which he had the utmost veneration, but put it into rehearsal without loss of time. I was so much intoxicated with this encouragement, that I overlooked the mysterious conduct of Mr. Marmozet, and attended the manager at the time appointed, when, to my infinite confusion, he pronounced my play improper for the stage, and

rejected it accordingly. As soon as I could recollect myself from the disorder into which this unexpected refusal had thrown me, I expressed a desire of hearing his objections, which were so groundless, indistinct, and unintelligible, that I persuaded myself he had not at all perused the piece, but had been prompted by somebody, whose lessons he had not rightly retained. However, I have been since informed, that the poor man's head, which was not naturally very clear, had been disordered with superstition, and that he laboured under the tyranny of a wife, and the terrors of hell-fire at the same time.

"Precipitated, in this manner, from the highest pinnacle of hope to the abyss of despondence, I was ready to sink under the burden of my affliction, and, in the bitterness of my anguish, could not help entertaining some doubts of Mr. Marmozet's integrity, when I recollected and compared the circumstances of his conduct towards me. I was encouraged in this suspicion, by being told, that my Lord Sheerwit had spoke of his character with great contempt, and, in particular, resented his insolence in opposing his own taste to that of his lordship concerning my tragedy. While I hesitated between different opinions of the matter, that friend, who, as I told you before, was a little hot-headed, favoured me with a visit, and having heard a circumstantial account of the whole affair, could not contain his indignation, but affirmed, without ceremony, that Marmozet was the sole occasion of my disappointment; that he had acted from first to last with the most perfidious dissimulation, cajoling me with insinuating civilities, while he underhand

employed all his art and influence to prejudice the ignorant manager against my performance; that nothing could equal his hypocrisy but his avarice, which engrossed the faculties of his soul so much, that he scrupled not to be guilty of the meanest practices to gratify that sordid appetite; that in consequence of this disposition, he had prostituted his honour in betraying my inexperience, and in undermining the interest of another author of established reputation, who had also offered a tragedy to the stage, which he thought would interfere with the success of the comedy he had bought, and determined to bring on at all events.

"I was shocked at the description of such a monster, which I could not believe existed in the world, bad as it is, and argued against the asseverations of my friend, by demonstrating the bad policy of such behaviour, which could not fail of entailing infamy upon the author; and the small temptation that a man of Mr. Marmozet's figure and success could have to consult his interest in such a grovelling manner, which must create contempt and abhorrence of him in his patrons, and effectually deprive him of the countenance and protection he now enjoys in such an eminent degree. He pretended to laugh at my simplicity, and asked if I knew for which of his virtues he was so much caressed by the people of fashion. 'It is not,' said he, 'for the qualities of his heart, that this little parasite is invited to the tables of dukes and lords, who hire extraordinary cooks for his entertainment. His avarice they see not, his ingratitude they feel not, his hypocrisy accommodates

itself to their humours, and is of consequence pleasing; but he is chiefly courted for his buffoonery, and will be admitted into the choicest parties of quality for his talent of mimicking Punch and his wife Joan, when a poet of the most exquisite genius is not able to attract the least regard.' God forbid, Mr. Random, that I should credit assertions that degrade the dignity of our superiors so much, and represent that poor man as the most abject of all beings! No! I looked upon them as the hyperboles of passion; and, though that comedy of which he spoke did actually appear, I dare not doubt the innocence of Mr. Marmozet, who, I am told, is as much as ever in favour with the earl: a circumstance that surely could not be, unless he had vindicated his character to the satisfaction of his lordship. Pray forgive this long digression, and give me hearing a little longer; for, thank Heaven! I am now near the goal.

"Baffled in all my attempts, I despaired of seeing my play acted; and bethought myself of choosing some employment, that might afford a sure though mean subsistence; but my landlord, to whom I was by this time considerably indebted, and who had laid his account with having his money paid all in a heap, from the profits of my third night, could not brook his disappointment, therefore made another effort in my behalf, and, by dint of interest, procured a message from a lady of fashion to Mr. Brayer, who had always professed a great veneration for her, desiring that he would set up my play forthwith, and assuring him that she and all her friends would support it in

the performance. To strengthen my interest, she engaged his best actors in my cause: and, in short, exerted herself so much, that it was again received, and my hopes began to revive. But Mr. Brayer, honest man, was so much engrossed by business of vast consequence, though to appearance he had nothing at all to do, that he could not find time to read it until the season was pretty far advanced; and read it he must, for, notwithstanding his having perused it before, his memory did not retain one circumstance of the matter.

"At length he favoured it with his attention, and, having proposed certain alterations, sent his duty to the lady who patronised it, and promised, on his honour, to bring it on next winter, provided these alterations should be made, and the copy delivered to him before the end of April. With an aching heart, I submitted to these conditions, and performed them accordingly. But fortune owed me another unforeseen mortification: Mr. Marmozet, during the summer, became joint patentee with Mr. Brayer; so that, when I claimed performance of articles, I was told, he could do nothing without the consent of his partner, who was pre-engaged to another author.

"My condition was rendered desperate by the death of my good friend and landlord, whose executors obtained a judgment against my effects, which they seized, turned me out into the streets naked, friendless, and forlorn; there I was arrested at the suit of my tailor, and thrown into this prison, where I have made shift to live these five weeks on the

bounty of my fellow-prisoners, who, I hope, are not the worse for the instruction and good offices by which I manifest my gratitude; but, in spite of all their charitable endeavours, my life was scarce tolerable, until your uncommon benevolence enabled me to enjoy it with comfort."

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

I AM SEIZED WITH A DEEP MELANCHOLY, AND BECOME A SLOVEN — AM RELIEVED BY MY UNCLE — HE PREVAILS UPON ME TO ENGAGE WITH HIS OWNERS, AS SURGEON OF THE SHIP WHICH HE COMMANDS — HE MAKES ME A CONSIDERABLE PRESENT — ENTERTAINS STRAP AS HIS STEWARD — I TAKE LEAVE OF MY FRIENDS, AND GO ON BOARD — THE SHIP ARRIVES IN THE DOWNS.

I SHALL not make any reflections on this story, in the course of which the reader must perceive how egregiously the simplicity and milky disposition of this worthy man had been duped and abused by a set of scoundrels, who were so habituated to falsehood and equivocation, that I verily believe they would have found the utmost difficulty in uttering one syllable of truth, though their lives had depended upon their sincerity. Notwithstanding all I had suffered from the knavery and selfishness of mankind, I was amazed and incensed at the base indifference which suffered such uncommon merit as he possessed to languish in obscurity, and struggle with all the miseries of a loathsome jail; and should have blessed the occasion that secluded me from such a perfidious world, had not the remembrance of the amiable Narcissa preserved my attachment to that society of which she constituted a part.

The picture of that lovely creature was the constant companion of my solitude. How often did I contemplate the resemblance of those enchanting features that first captivated my heart! How often did I weep over those endearing scenes which her image recalled! and how often did I curse my perfidious fate for having robbed me of the fair original! In vain did my imagination flatter me with schemes of future happiness; surly reason always interposed, and, in a moment, overthrew that unsubstantial fabric, by chastising the extravagance of my hope, and representing my unhappy situation in the right point of view.

In vain did I fly for refuge to the amusements of the place, and engage in the parties of Jackson, at cards, billiards, ninepins, and fives; a train of melancholy thoughts took possession of my soul, which even the conversation of Melopoyn could not divert. I ordered Strap to inquire every day at Banter's lodgings, in expectation of hearing again from my charmer; and my disappointment considerably augmented my chagrin. My affectionate valet was infected with my sorrow, and often sat with me whole hours without speaking, uttering sigh for sigh, and shedding tear for tear. This fellowship increased our distemper; he became incapable of business, and was discarded by his master; while I, seeing my money melt away, without any certainty of deliverance, and, in short, all my hopes frustrated, grew negligent of life, lost all appetite, and degenerated into such a sloven, that during the space of two months, I was neither washed, shifted, nor shaved; so that my face,

rendered meagre with abstinence, was obscured with dirt, and overshadowed with hair, and my whole appearance squalid and even frightful; when, one day, Strap brought me notice, that there was a man below who wanted to speak with me. Roused at this intelligence, and in full hopes of receiving a letter from the dear object of my love, I ran downstairs with the utmost precipitation, and found, to my infinite surprise, my generous uncle Mr. Bowling. Transported at the sight, I sprung forward to embrace him. Upon which he started aside with great agility, drew his hanger, and put himself upon his guard, saying, "Avast, brother, avast! sheer off! — Yoho! you turnkey, why don't you keep a better look-out? here's one of your crazy prisoners broke from his lashings, I do suppose." I could not help laughing heartily at his mistake; but this I soon rectified by my voice, which he instantly recollected, and shook me by the hand with great affection, testifying his concern at seeing me in such a miserable condition.

I conducted him to my apartment, where, in presence of Strap, whom I introduced to him as one of my best friends, he gave me to understand, that he was just arrived from the coast of Guinea, after having made a pretty successful voyage, in which he acted as mate, until the ship was attacked by a French privateer; that the captain being killed during the engagement, he had taken the command, and was so fortunate as to sink the enemy; after which exploit he fell in with a merchant ship from Martinico, laden with sugar, indigo, and some silver; and, by virtue

of his letter of marque, attacked, took, and brought her safe into Kinsale, in Ireland, where she was condemned as a lawful prize; by which means he had not only got a pretty sum of money, but also acquired the favour of his owners, who had already conferred upon him the command of a large ship, mounted with twenty nine-pounders, ready to sail upon a very advantageous voyage, which he was not at liberty to discover. And he assured me, that it was with the greatest difficulty that he had found me, in consequence of a direction left for him at his lodgings at Wapping.

I was rejoiced beyond measure at this account of his good fortune; and, at his desire, recounted all the adventures that had happened to me since we parted. When he understood the particulars of Strap's attachment to me, he squeezed his hand very cordially, and promised to make a man of him; then giving me ten guineas for my present occasion, took a direction for the tailor who arrested me, and went away in order to discharge the debt, telling me at parting, that he would soon fetch up all my leeway with a wet sail.

I was utterly confounded at this sudden transition, which affected me more than any reverse I had formerly felt; and a crowd of incoherent ideas rushed so impetuously upon my imagination, that my reason could neither separate nor connect them, when Strap, whose joy had manifested itself in a thousand fooleries, came into my room with his shaving utensils, and, without any previous intimation, began to lather my beard, whistling with great emotion all the

while. I started from my reverie, and being too well acquainted with Strap, to trust myself in his hands while he was under such agitation, desired to be excused, sent for another barber, and suffered myself to be trimmed. Having performed the ceremony of ablution, I shifted, and dressing in my gayest apparel, waited for the return of my uncle, who was agreeably surprised at my sudden transformation.

This beneficent kinsman had satisfied my creditor, and obtained an order for my discharge, so that I was no longer a prisoner; but as I had some reluctance to part with my friends and fellows in distress, I prevailed upon Mr. Bowling to favour us with his company, and invited Mr. Melopoyn and Jackson to spend the evening at my apartment, where I regaled them with a supper, good wine, and the news of my release, on which they heartily congratulated me, notwithstanding the loss of my company, which, they were pleased to say, they should severely feel. As for Jackson, his misfortune made so little impression on himself, and he was altogether so loose, indifferent, and indiscreet, that I could scarce pity his situation. But I had conceived a veneration and friendship for the poet, who was, in all respects, an object much more worthy of compassion and regard. When our guests withdrew, and my uncle had retired, with an intention to visit me next morning, I made up a bundle of some linen, and other necessaries, and, bidding Strap carry them to Mr. Melopoyn's lodging, went thither myself, and pressed it upon his acceptance, with five guineas, which, with much difficulty, he received, assuring me, at the same time, that he

should never have it in his power to make satisfaction. I then asked if I could serve him any other way? To which he answered, "You already have done too much;" and unable to contain the emotions of his soul any longer, burst into tears and wept aloud. Moved at this spectacle, I left him to his repose; and when my uncle returned in the morning, represented his character in such a favourable light, that the honest seaman was affected with his distress, and determined to follow my example, in presenting him with five pieces more. Upon which, that I might save him some confusion, I advised Mr. Bowling to enclose it in a letter to be delivered by Strap after we should be gone.

This was accordingly done. I took a formal leave of all my acquaintance in the jail; and just as I was about to step into an hackney-coach at the gate, Jackson calling me, I returned, and he asked me in a whisper, if I could lend him a shilling? His demand being so moderate, and in all likelihood the last he would make upon me, I slipped a guinea into his hand, which he no sooner perceived, than he cried, "O Jesus! a guinea!" then laying hold of a button of my coat, broke out into an immoderate fit of laughter; and when his convulsion was ended, told me, I was an honest fellow, and let me go. The coachman was ordered to drive to Mr. Bowling's lodgings, where, when we arrived, he entered into a serious discourse with me on the subject of my situation, and proposed that I should sail with him in quality of his surgeon; in which case he would put me in a method of getting a fortune in a few years by

my own industry; and assured me, that I might expect to inherit all that he should die possessed of, provided I should survive him. Though I was penetrated with a sense of his generosity, I was startled at a proposal that offered violence to my love, and signified my sentiments on that head, which he did not seem to relish, but observed, that love was the fruit of idleness; that, when once I should be employed in business, and my mind engaged in making money, I should be no more troubled with these silly notions, which none but your fair-weather Jacks, who have nothing but their pleasure to mind, ought to entertain. I was piqued at this insinuation, which I looked upon as a reproach, and, without giving myself time to deliberate, accepted his offer. He was overjoyed at my compliance, carried me immediately to his chief owner, with whom a bargain was struck; so that then I could not retract with honour, had I been ever so much averse to the agreement. That I might not have time to cool, he bade me draw out a list of medicines for a complement of five hundred men, adapted to the distempers of hot climates, and sufficient for a voyage of eighteen months, and carry it to a certain wholesale apothecary, who would also provide me in two well-qualified mates. While I was thus employed, Strap came in, and looked very blank, when he understood my resolution. However, after a pause of some minutes, he insisted upon going along with me; and at my desire was made ship's steward by Captain Bowling, who promised to be at the expense of fitting him out, and to lend him two hundred pounds to purchase an adventure.

A CONSIDERABLE PRESENT

When I had delivered my list of medicines, chosen a couple of my own countrymen for mates, and bespoke a set of chirurgical instruments, my uncle told me, that, by his last voyage, he had cleared almost three thousand pounds, one-third of which he would immediately make over and put into my hands; that he would procure for me credit to the value of so much more, in such goods as would turn to best account in the country to which we were bound; and that, although he looked upon my interest as his own, he would keep the remaining part of his fortune in his own disposal, with a view of preserving his independence, and a power of punishing me, in case I should not make a good use of what he had already bestowed.

Without troubling the reader with an account of the effect which this surprising generosity had upon my mind, I shall only say, that his promises were instantly performed, and an invoice of merchandise proper for the voyage presented to me, that I might purchase the goods, and ship them with all expedition. In the midst of this hurry, the remembrance of my charming Narcissa often interposed, and made me the most miserable of all mortals. I was distracted with the thought of being torn from her, perhaps for ever; and though the hope of seeing her again might have supported me under the torments of separation, I could not reflect upon the anguish she must feel at parting with me, and the incessant sorrows to which her tender bosom would be exposed during my absence, without being pierced with the deepest affliction. As my imagination was daily and

nightly upon the rack to invent some method of mitigating this cruel stroke, or at least of acquitting my love and honour in the opinion of this gentle creature, I at length stumbled upon an expedient, with which the reader will be made acquainted in due time; and, in consequence of my determination, became less uneasy and disturbed.

My business being finished, and the ship ready to sail, I resolved to make my last appearance among my acquaintance at the other end of the town, where I had not been since my imprisonment; and as I had, by the advice of my uncle, taken off some very rich clothes for sale, I put on the gayest suit in my possession, and went in a chair to the coffee-house I used to frequent, where I found my friend Banter so confounded at the magnificence of my dress, that, when I made up to him, he gazed at me with a look of astonishment, without being able, for some minutes, to open his lips; then pulling me aside by the sleeve, and fixing his eyes on mine, accosted me in this manner: "Random, where the devil have you been? eh! — What is the meaning of all this finery? — Oho! I understand you. — You are just arrived from the country! what! the roads are good, eh! — Well, Random, you are a bold fellow, and a lucky fellow! — but take care, the pitcher goes often to the well, but is broke at last." So saying, he pointed to his collar; by which gesture, and the broken hints he had ejaculated, I found he suspected me of having robbed on the highway; and I laughed very heartily at his supposition. Without explaining myself any further, I told him he was mistaken in his conjecture;

that I had been for some time past with the relation of whom he had frequently heard me speak; and that, as I should set out next day upon my travels, I had come to take my leave of my friends, and to receive of him the money he had borrowed from me, which, now that I was going abroad, I should certainly have occasion for.

He was a little disconcerted at this demand; but, recollecting himself in a moment, swore in an affected passion, that I had used him extremely ill, and he would never forgive me, for having, by this short warning, put it out of his power to free himself of an obligation he could no longer bear. I could not help smiling at this pretended delicacy, which I commended highly, telling him he needed not to be uneasy on that score, for I would give him a direction to a merchant in the city, with whom I would leave a discharge for the sum, to be delivered upon payment. He professed much joy at this expedient, and with great eagerness asked the person's name and place of abode, which he forthwith wrote in his pocket-book, assuring me, that he should not be long in my debt. This affair, which I knew he would never after think of, being settled to his satisfaction, I sent cards to all my friends, desiring the favour of their company at the tavern in the evening, when they honoured my invitation, and I had the pleasure of treating them in a very elegant manner, at which they expressed equal admiration as applause. Having enjoyed ourselves till midnight, I took my leave of them, and was well-nigh stifled with caresses. Next day I set out with Strap, in a post-chaise for Gravesend, where we went on board, and,

the wind serving, weighed anchor in less than twelve hours. Without meeting with any accident, we reached the Downs, where we were obliged to come to an anchor, and wait for an easterly wind to carry us out of the Channel.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

I SET OUT FOR SUSSEX — CONSULT MRS. SAGELY — ACHIEVE AN INTERVIEW WITH NARCISSA — RETURN TO THE SHIP — WE GET CLEAR OF THE CHANNEL — I LEARN OUR DESTINATION — WE ARE CHASED BY A LARGE SHIP — THE COMPANY ARE DISMAYED, AND ENCOURAGED BY THE CAPTAIN'S SPEECH — OUR PURSUER HAPPENS TO BE AN ENGLISH MAN-OF-WAR — WE ARRIVE AT THE COAST OF GUINEA, PURCHASE 400 NEGROES, SAIL FOR PARAGUAY, GET SAFE INTO THE RIVER OF PLATE, AND SELL OUR CARGO TO GREAT ADVANTAGE.

IT was now I put in execution the scheme I had projected at London; and asking leave of the captain for Strap and me to stay on shore till the wind should become favourable, my request was granted, because he had orders to remain in the Downs until he should receive some despatches from London, which he did not expect in less than a week. Having imparted my resolution to my trusty valet, who (though he endeavoured to dissuade me from such a rash undertaking) would not quit me in the enterprise, I hired horses, and set out immediately for that part of Sussex where my charmer was confined, which was not above thirty miles distant from Deal, where we mounted. As I was perfectly well acquainted with the extent of the squire's estate and influence, I

halted within five miles of his house, where we remained till the twilight, at which time we set forward, and, by the favour of a dark night, reached a copse about half a mile from the village where Mrs. Sagely lived. Here we left our horses tied to a tree, and went directly to the house of my old benefactress, Strap trembling all the way, and venting ejaculatory petitions to Heaven for our safety. Her habitation being quite solitary, we arrived at the door without being observed, when I ordered my companion to enter by himself, and, in case there should be company with her, deliver a letter which I had writ for that purpose, and say that a friend of hers in London, understanding that he intended to travel this road, had committed it to his care. He rapped at the door, to which the good old matron coming, told him, that being a lone woman, he must excuse her if she did not open it until he had declared his name and business. He answered, that his name was unknown to her, and that his business was to deliver a letter, which, to free her from all manner of apprehension, he would convey to her through the space between the door and the threshold. This he instantly performed; and she no sooner read the contents, which specified my being present, than she cried, "If the person who wrote this letter be at hand, let him speak, that I may be assured by his voice whether or not I may safely admit him." I forthwith applied my mouth to the keyhole, and pronounced, "Dear mother, you need not be afraid; it is I, so much indebted to your goodness, who now crave admittance." She knew my voice, and, opening the door

immediately, received me with a truly maternal affection, manifesting, by the tears she let fall, her concern lest I should be discovered, for she had been informed of everything that had happened between Narcissa and me, from the dear captive's own mouth.

When I explained the motive of my journey, which was no other than a desire of seeing the object of my love before I should quit the kingdom, that I might in person convince her of the necessity I was under to leave her, reconcile her to that event, by describing the advantages that in all probability would attend it, repeat my vows of eternal constancy, and enjoy the melancholy pleasure of a tender embrace at parting; I say, when I had thus signified my intention, Mrs. Sagely told me, that Narcissa, upon her return from Bath, had been so strictly watched, that nobody but one or two of the servants, devoted to her brother, was admitted to her presence; that afterwards she had been a little enlarged, and was permitted to see company, during which indulgence she had been several times at her cottage; but of late she had been betrayed by one of the servants, who discovered to the squire, that he had once carried a letter from her to the post-house, directed to me; upon which information she was now more confined than ever, and that I could have no chance of seeing her, unless I would run the risk of getting into the garden, where she and her maid were every day allowed to take the air, and lie hid until I should have an opportunity of speaking to them — an adventure attended with such danger, that no man in his right wits would attempt it. This enterprise, hazardous as it was, I

resolved to perform, in spite of all the arguments of Mrs. Sagely, who reasoned, chid, and entreated by turns, and the tears and prayers of Strap, who conjured me, on his knees, to have more regard to myself, as well as to him, than to attempt my own destruction in such a precipitate manner. I was deaf to everything but the suggestions of my love; and ordering him to return immediately with the horses to the inn from whence we set out, and wait for my coming in that place, he at first peremptorily refused to leave me, until I persuaded him, that, if our horses should remain where they were till daylight, they would certainly be discovered, and the whole county alarmed. On this consideration, he took his leave in a sorrowful plight, kissed my hand, and, weeping, cried, "God knows if ever I shall see you again."—My kind landlady, finding me obstinate, gave me her best advice how to behave in the execution of my project; and, after having persuaded me to take a little refreshment, accommodated me with a bed, and left me to my repose.

Early in the morning, I arose, and armed with a couple of loaded pistols and a hanger, went to the back of the squire's garden, climbed over the wall, and, according to Mrs. Sagely's direction, concealed myself in a thicket, hard by an alcove that terminated a walk at a good distance from the house, which (I was told) my mistress chiefly frequented. Here I absconded from five o'clock in the morning to six in the evening, without seeing a human creature; at last I perceived two women approaching, whom, by my throbbing heart, I soon recognised to be the adorable

Narcissa and Miss Williams. I felt the strongest agitation of soul at the sight: and guessing that they would repose themselves in the alcove, stepped into it unperceived, and laid upon the stone table a picture of myself in miniature, for which I had sat in London, purposing to leave it with Narcissa before I should go abroad. I exposed it in this manner, as an introduction to my own appearance, which, without some previous intimation, I was afraid might have an unlucky effect upon the delicate nerves of my fair enslaver; and then withdrew into the thicket, where I could hear their discourse, and suit myself to the circumstances of the occasion. As they advanced, I observed an air of melancholy in the countenance of Narcissa, blended with such unspeakable sweetness, that I could scarce refrain from flying into her arms, and kissing away the pearly drop that stood collected in each bewitching eye.

According to my expectation, she entered the alcove, and perceiving something on the table, took it up. No sooner did she cast her eye upon the features, than, startled at the resemblance, she cried, "Good God!" and the roses instantly vanished from her cheeks. Her confidant, alarmed at this exclamation, looked at the picture, and, struck with the likeness, exclaimed, "O Jesus! the very features of Mr. Random!" Narcissa having recollected herself a little, said, "Whatever angel brought it hither as a comfort to me in my affliction, I am thankful for the benefit, and will preserve it as the dearest object of my care." So saying, she kissed it with surprising ardour, shed a flood of tears, and then deposited the

lifeless image in her lovely bosom. Transported at these symptoms of her unaltered affection, I was about to throw myself at her feet, when Miss Williams, whose reflection was less engaged than that of her mistress, observed, that the picture could not transport itself hither, and that she could not help thinking I was not far off. The gentle Narcissa, startling at this conjecture, answered, "Heaven forbid! for, although nothing in the universe could yield me satisfaction equal to that of his presence for one poor moment, in a proper place, I would rather forfeit his company — almost for ever, than see him here, where his life would be exposed to so much danger." I could no longer restrain the impulse of my passion, but, breaking from my concealment, stood before her, when she uttered a fearful shriek, and fainted in the arms of her companion. I flew towards the treasure of my soul, clasped her in my embrace, and, with the warmth of my kisses brought her again to life. O! that I were endowed with the expression of a Raphael, the graces of a Guido, the magic touches of a Titian, that I might represent the fond concern, the chastened rapture, and ingenuous blush, that mingled in her beauteous face when she opened her eyes upon me, and pronounced, "O heavens! is it you?"

I am afraid I have already encroached upon the reader's patience, with the particulars of this amour, on which, I own, I cannot help being impertinently circumstantial. I shall therefore omit the less material passages of this interview, during which I convinced her reason, though I could not appease the

sad presages of her love, with regard to the long voyage and dangers I must undergo. When we had spent an hour (which was all she could spare from the barbarity of her brother's vigilance) in lamenting over our hard fate, and in repeating our reciprocal vows, Miss Williams reminded us of the necessity there was for our immediate parting; and sure, lovers never parted with such sorrow and reluctance as we. But because my words are incapable of doing justice to this affecting circumstance, I am obliged to draw a veil over it, and observe, that I returned in the dark to the house of Mrs. Sagely, who was overjoyed to hear of my success, and opposed the tumults of my grief with such strength of reason, that my mind regained in some measure its tranquillity; and that very night, after having forced upon the good gentlewoman a purse of twenty guineas, as a token of my gratitude and esteem, I took my leave of her, and set out on foot for the inn, where my arrival freed honest Strap from the horrors of unutterable dread.

We took horse immediately, and alighted early next morning at Deal, where I found my uncle in great concern on account of my absence, because he had received his despatches, and must have weighed with the first fair wind, whether I had been on board or not. Next day, a brisk easterly gale springing up, we set sail, and in eight-and-forty hours got clear of the Channel.

When we were about two hundred leagues to westward of the Land's End, the captain taking me apart into the cabin, told me, that, now he was per-

mitted by his instructions, he would disclose the intent and destination of our voyage: "The ship," said he, "which has been fitted out at a great expense, is bound for the coast of Guinea, where we shall exchange part of our cargo for slaves and gold dust; from thence we will transport our negroes to Buenos-Ayres in New Spain, where, by virtue of passports obtained from our own court, and that of Madrid, we will dispose of them and the goods that remain on board for silver, by means of our supercargo, who is perfectly well acquainted with the coast, the lingo, and inhabitants." Being thus let into the secret of our expedition, I borrowed of the supercargo a Spanish grammar, dictionary, and some other books of the same language, which I studied with such application, that, before we arrived in New Spain, I could maintain a conversation with him in that tongue. Being arrived in the warm latitudes, I ordered, with the captain's consent, the whole ship's company to be blooded and purged, myself undergoing the same evacuation, in order to prevent those dangerous fevers to which northern constitutions are subject in hot climates; and I have reason to believe that this precaution was not unserviceable, for we lost but one sailor during our whole passage to the coast.

One day, when we had been about five weeks at sea, we descried to windward a large ship bearing down upon us with all the sail she could carry. Upon which my uncle ordered the studding-sails to be hoisted, and the ship to be cleared for engaging; but finding that, to use the seaman's phrase, we were

very much wronged by the ship which had us in chase, and which by this time had hoisted French colours, he commanded the studding-sails to be taken in, the courses to be clewed up, the maintop sail to be backed, the tompions to be taken out of the guns, and every man to repair to his quarters. While everybody was busied in the performance of these orders, Strap came upon the quarter-deck, trembling, and looking aghast, and, with a voice half suppressed by fear, asked if I thought we were a match for the vessel in pursuit of us? Observing his consternation, I said, "What! are you afraid, Strap?" "Afraid!" he replied, "n-n-no; what should I be afraid of? I thank God, I have a clear conscience; but I believe it will be a bloody battle, and I wish you may not have occasion for another hand to assist you in the cockpit." I immediately perceived his drift, and making the captain acquainted with his situation, desired he might be stationed below with me and my mates. My uncle, incensed at his pusillanimity, bade me send him down instantly, that his fear might not infect the ship's company; whereupon I told the poor steward, that I had begged him for my assistant, and desired him to go down and help my mates to get ready the instruments and dressings. Notwithstanding the satisfaction he must have felt at these tidings, he affected a shyness of quitting the upper deck; and said, he hoped I did not imagine he was afraid to do his duty above board; for he believed himself as well prepared for death as any man in the ship, no disparagement to me or the captain. I was disgusted at this affectation, and,

in order to punish his hypocrisy, assured him, he might take his choice either of going down to the cockpit with me, or of staying upon deck during the engagement. Alarmed at this indifference, he replied, "Well, to oblige you, I'll go down; but, remember, it is more for your sake than my own." So saying, he disappeared in a twinkling, without waiting for an answer.

By this time we could observe two tier of guns in the ship which pursued us, and which was now but two short miles astern. This discovery had an evident effect upon the sailors, who did not scruple to say, that we should be torn to pieces, and blown out of the water, and that, if in case any of them should lose their precious limbs, they must go a-begging for life, for there was no provision made by the merchants for those poor souls who were maimed in their service. The captain, understanding this backwardness, ordered the crew abaft, and spoke to them thus: "My lads, I am told you hang an a—se. I have gone to sea thirty years man and boy, and never saw English sailors afraid before. Mayhap you think I want to expose you for the lucre of gain. Whosoever thinks so, thinks a d—ned lie, for my whole cargo is insured; so that, in case I should be taken, my loss would not be great. The enemy is stronger than we, to be sure. What then? have we not a chance for carrying away one of her masts, and so get clear of her? If we find her too hard for us, 't is but striking at last. If any man is hurt in the engagement, I promise on the word of an honest seaman, to make him a recompense according to his loss. So now, you

that are lazy, lubberly, cowardly dogs, get away, and skulk in the hold and bread room; and you that are jolly boys, stand by me, and let us give one broadside for the honour of Old England."

This eloquent harangue was so well adapted to the disposition of his hearers, that one and all of them, pulling off their hats, waved them over their heads, and saluted him with three cheers; upon which he sent his boy for two large case bottles of brandy, and having treated every man with a dram, they repaired to their quarters, and waited impatiently for the word of command. I must do my uncle the justice to say, that, in the whole of his disposition, he behaved with the utmost intrepidity, conduct, and deliberation. The enemy being very near, he ordered me to my station, and was just going to give the word for hoisting the colours, and firing, when the supposed Frenchman hauled down his white pennant, jack, and ensign, hoisted English ones, and fired a gun ahead of us. This was a joyful event to Captain Bowling, who immediately showed his colours, and fired a gun to leeward. Upon which the other ship ran alongside of us, hailed him, and giving him to know that she was an English man-of-war of forty guns, ordered him to hoist out his boat and come on board. This command he obeyed with the more alacrity, because, upon inquiry, he found that she was commanded by an old messmate of his, who was overjoyed to see him, detained him to dinner, and sent his barge for the supercargo and me, who were very much caressed on his account. As this commander was destined to cruise upon the French, in the latitude of Martinico,

his stem and quarters were adorned with white fleur-de-lis, and the whole shell of the ship so much disguised for a decoy to the enemy, that it was no wonder my uncle did not know her, although he had sailed on board of her many years. We kept company with her four days, during which time the captains were never asunder, and then parted, our course lying different from hers.

In less than a fortnight after our separation, we made the land of Guinea, near the mouth of the river Gambia, and trading along the coast as far to the southward of the line as Angola and Bengula, in less than six months disposed of the greatest part of our cargo, and purchased four hundred negroes, my adventure having been laid out in gold dust.

Our complement being made up, we took our departure from Cape Negro, and arrived in the Rio de la Plata in six weeks, having met with nothing remarkable in our voyage, except an epidemic fever, not unlike the jail distemper, which broke out among our slaves, and carried off a good many of the ship's company; among whom I lost one of my mates, and poor Strap had well-nigh given up the ghost. Having produced our passport to the Spanish governor, we were received with great courtesy, sold our slaves in a very few days, and could have put off five times the number at our own price; though we were obliged to smuggle the rest of our merchandise, consisting of European bale goods, which, however, we made shift to dispose of at a great advantage.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

I AM INVITED TO THE VILLA OF A SPANISH DON, WHERE WE MEET WITH AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN, AND MAKE A VERY INTERESTING DISCOVERY — WE LEAVE BUENOS-AYRES, AND ARRIVE AT JAMAICA.

OUR ship being freed from the disagreeable lading of negroes, to whom, indeed, I had been a miserable slave since our leaving the coast of Guinea, I began to enjoy myself, and breathe with pleasure the pure air of Paraguay, this part of which is reckoned the Montpelier of South America, and has obtained, on account of its climate, the name of Buenos-Ayres. It was in this delicious place that I gave myself entirely up to the thoughts of my dear Narcissa, whose image still kept possession of my breast, and whose charms, enhanced by absence, appeared to my imagination, if possible, more engaging than ever! I calculated the profits of my voyage, which even exceeded my expectation; resolved to purchase a handsome sinecure upon my arrival in England, and, if I should find the squire as averse to me as ever, marry his sister by stealth; and, in case our family should increase, rely upon the generosity of my uncle, who was by this time worth a considerable sum.

While I amused myself with these agreeable projects, and the transporting hopes of enjoying Narcissa, we were very much caressed by the Spanish gentlemen, who frequently formed parties of pleasure for our entertainment, in which we made excursions a good way into the country. Among those who signalised themselves by their civility to us, there was one Don Antonio de Ribera, a very polite young gentleman, with whom I had contracted an intimate friendship, who invited us one day to his country house, and, as a further inducement to our compliance, promised to procure for us the company of an English signior, who had been settled in those parts many years, and acquired the love and esteem of the whole province, by his affability, good sense, and honourable behaviour.

We accepted his invitation, and set out for his villa, where we had not been longer than an hour, when the person arrived in whose favour I had been so much prepossessed. He was a tall man, remarkably well shaped, of a fine mien and appearance, commanding respect, and seemed to be turned of forty; the features of his face were saddened with a reserve and gravity, which in other countries would have been thought the effect of melancholy; but here appeared to have been contracted by his commerce with the Spaniards, who are remarkable for that severity of countenance. Understanding from Don Antonio that we were his countrymen, he saluted us all round very complaisantly, and fixing his eyes very attentively on me, uttered a deep sigh. I had been struck with a profound veneration for him at his

first coming into the room; and no sooner observed this expression of his sorrow, directed, as it were, in a particular manner to me, than my heart took part in his grief. I sympathised involuntarily, and sighed in my turn. Having asked leave of our entertainer, he accosted us in English, professed his satisfaction at seeing so many of his countrymen in such a remote place, and asked the captain, who went by the name of Signior Thoma, from what part of Britain he had sailed, and whither he was bound. My uncle told him that we had sailed from the river Thames, and were bound for the same place, by the way of Jamaica, where we intended to take in a lading of sugar.

Having satisfied himself in these and other particulars about the state of the war, he gave us to understand that he had a longing desire to revisit his native country, in consequence of which he had already transmitted to Europe the greatest part of his fortune in neutral bottoms, and would willingly embark the rest of it with himself, in our ship, provided the captain had no objection to such a passenger. My uncle very prudently replied, that for his part he should be glad of his company, if he could procure the consent of the governor, without which he durst not admit him on board, whatever inclination he had to oblige him. The gentleman approved of his discretion, and, telling him that there would be no difficulty in obtaining the connivance of the governor, who was his good friend, shifted the conversation to another subject.

I was overjoyed to hear his intention, and already

interested myself so much in his favour, that, had he been disappointed, I should have been very unhappy. In the course of our entertainment, he eyed me with uncommon attachment; I felt a surprising attraction towards him; when he spoke, I listened with attention and reverence; the dignity of his deportment filled me with affection and awe; and, in short, the emotions of my soul, in presence of this stranger, were strong and unaccountable!

Having spent the best part of the day with us, he took his leave, telling Captain Thomas, that he should hear from him in a short time. He was no sooner gone, than I asked a thousand questions about him of Don Antonio, who could give me no other satisfaction, than that his name was Don Rodrigo, that he had lived fifteen or sixteen years in these parts, was reputed rich, and supposed to have been unfortunate in his younger years, because he was observed to nourish a pensive melancholy, even from the time of his first settlement among them; but that nobody had ventured to inquire into the cause of his sorrow, in consideration of his peace, which might suffer in the recapitulation of his misfortunes.

I was seized with an irresistible desire of knowing the particulars of his fate, and enjoyed not one hour of repose during the whole night, by reason of the eager conceptions that inspired me with regard to his story, which I resolved, if possible, to learn. Next morning, while we were at breakfast, three mules richly caparisoned arrived with a message from Don Rodrigo, desiring our company, and that of Don Antonio, at his house, which was situated about ten

miles farther up in the country. I was pleased with this invitation, in consequence of which we mounted the mules which he had provided for us, and alighted at his house before noon. Here we were splendidly entertained by the generous stranger, who still seemed to show a particular regard for me, and, after dinner, made me a present of a ring set with a beautiful amethyst, the production of that country, saying, at the same time, that he was once blessed with a son, who, had he lived, would have been nearly of my age. This observation, delivered with a profound sigh, made my heart throb with violence; a crowd of confused ideas rushed upon my imagination, which while I endeavoured to unravel, my uncle perceived my absence of thought, and tapping me on the shoulder, said, "Oons! are you asleep, Rory!"

Before I had time to reply, Don Rodrigo, with uncommon eagerness of voice and look, pronounced, "Pray, captain, what is the young gentleman's name?" — "His name," said my uncle, "is Roderick Random." "Gracious Powers!" cried the stranger, starting up, — "and his mother's?" — "His mother," answered the captain, amazed, "was called Charlotte Bowling." "O bounteous Heaven!" exclaimed Don Rodrigo, springing across the table, and clasping me in his arms, "my son! my son! have I found thee again? — do I hold thee in my embrace, after having lost and despaired of seeing thee so long?" So saying, he fell upon my neck and wept aloud with joy; while the power of nature operating strongly in my breast, I was lost in rapture, and while he pressed me to his heart, let fall a shower of tears into his

bosom. His utterance was choked up a good while by the agitation of his soul. At length he broke out into, "Mysterious Providence! — O my dear Charlotte! there yet remains a pledge of our love; and such a pledge! — so found! — O Infinite Goodness; let me adore thy all-wise decrees!" Having thus expressed himself, he kneeled upon the floor, lifted up his eyes and hands to heaven, and remained some minutes in a silent ecstasy of devotion. I put myself in the same posture, adored the All-good Disposer in a prayer of mental thanksgiving; and when his ejaculation was ended, did homage to my father, and craved his parental blessing. He hugged me again with unutterable fondness, and having implored the protection of Heaven upon my head, raised me from the ground, and presented me as his son to the company, who wept in concert over this affecting scene. Among the rest, my uncle did not fail to discover the goodness and joy of his heart. *Albeit unused to the melting mood*, he blubbered with great tenderness, and, wringing my father's hand, cried, "Brother Random, I 'm rejoiced to see you — God be praised for this happy meeting." Don Rodrigo, understanding that he was his brother-in-law, embraced him affectionately, saying, "Are you my Charlotte's brother? — Alas! unhappy Charlotte! but why should I repine? we shall meet again never more to part! — Brother, you are truly welcome. — Dear son, I am transported with unspeakable joy! — This day is a jubilee — my friends and servants shall share my satisfaction."

While he despatched messengers to the gentlemen

in the neighbourhood, to announce this event, and gave orders for a grand entertainment, I was so much affected with the tumults of passion which assailed me on this great, sudden, and unexpected occasion, that I fell sick, fevered, and in less than three hours became quite delirious; so that the preparations were countermanded, and the joy of the family converted into grief and despair. Physicians were instantly called; I was plentifully blooded in the foot, my lower extremities were bathed in a decoction of salutiferous herbs; in ten hours after I was taken ill I enjoyed a critical sweat, and next day felt no remains of the distemper, but an agreeable lassitude, which did not hinder me from getting up. During the progress of this fever, which from the term of its duration is called *ephemera*, my father never once quitted my bedside, but administered the prescriptions of the physicians with the most pious care; while Captain Bowling manifested his concern by the like attendance. I no sooner found myself delivered from the disease, than I bethought myself of my honest friend, Strap; and resolving to make him happy forthwith in the knowledge of my good fortune, told my father in general, that I had been infinitely obliged to this faithful adherent, and begged he would indulge me so far as to send for him, without letting him know my happiness, until he could receive an account of it from my own mouth.

My request was instantly complied with, and a messenger with a spare mule detached to the ship, carrying orders from the captain to the mate to send the steward by the bearer. My health being,

in the meantime, re-established, and my mind composed, I began to relish this important turn of my fortune, in reflecting upon the advantages with which it must be attended; and as the idea of my lovely Narcissa always joined itself to every scene of happiness I could imagine, I entertained myself now with the prospect of possessing her in that distinguished sphere to which she was entitled by her birth and qualifications. Having often mentioned her name while I was deprived of my senses, my father guessed that there was an intimate connexion between us, and, discovering the picture which hung in my bosom by a ribbon, did not doubt that it was the resemblance of my amiable mistress. In this belief he was confirmed by my uncle, who told him that it was the picture of a young woman, to whom I was under promise of marriage. Alarmed at this piece of information, Don Rodrigo took the first opportunity of questioning me about the particulars of this affair, which when I had candidly recounted, he approved of my passion, and promised to contribute all in his power towards its success. Though I never doubted his generosity, I was transported on this occasion, and throwing myself at his feet, told him, he had now completed my happiness; for, without the possession of Narcissa, I should be miserable among all the pleasures of life. He raised me with a smile of paternal fondness; said, that he knew what it was to be in love; and observed, that if he had been as tenderly beloved by his father as I was by mine, he should not now perhaps have cause — here he was interrupted by a sigh, the

tear rushed into his eye, he suppressed the dictates of his grief, and the time being opportune, desired me to relate the passages of my life, which my uncle had told him were manifold and surprising. I recounted the most material circumstances of my fortune, to which he listened with wonder and attention, manifesting from time to time those different emotions which my different situations may be supposed to have raised in a parent's breast, and, when my detail was ended, blessed God for the adversity I had undergone, which, he said, enlarged the understanding, improved the heart, steeled the constitution, and qualified a young man for all the duties and enjoyments of life, much better than any education which affluence could bestow.

When I had thus satisfied his curiosity, I discovered an inclination to hear the particulars of his story, which he gratified, by beginning with his marriage, and proceeded to the day of his disappearing, as I have related in the first part of my memoirs. "Careless of life," continued he, "and unable to live in a place where every object recalled the memory of my dear Charlotte, whom I had lost through the barbarity of an unnatural parent, I took my leave of you, my child, then an infant, with a heart full of unutterable woe, but little suspecting that my father's unkindness would have descended to my innocent orphan; and, setting out alone at midnight for the nearest seaport, early next morning got on board a ship, bound as I had heard for France, and bargaining with the master for my passage, bade a long adieu to my native country,

and put to sea with the first fair wind. The place of our destination was Granville; but we had the misfortune to run upon a ridge of rocks near the Island of Alderney, called the Caskets, where the sea running high, the ship went to pieces, the boat sunk alongside, and every soul on board perished, except myself, who, by the assistance of a grating, got ashore on the coast of Normandy. I went directly to Caen, where I was so lucky as to meet with a count, whom I had formerly known in my travels. With this gentleman I set out for Paris, where I was recommended by him and other friends as a tutor to a young nobleman, whom I accompanied to the court of Spain.

There we remained a whole year, at the end of which my pupil being recalled by his father, I quitted my office, and staid behind, by the advice of a certain Spanish grandee, who took me into his protection, and introduced me to another nobleman, who was afterwards created viceroy of Peru. He insisted on my attending him to his government in the Indies, where, however, by reason of my religion, it was not in his power to make my fortune any other way than by encouraging me to trade, which I had not long prosecuted, when my patron died, and I found myself in the midst of strangers, without one friend to support or protect me. Urged by this consideration, I sold my effects, and removed to this country, the governor of which, having been appointed by the viceroy, was my intimate acquaintance. Here has Heaven prospered my endeavours, during a residence of sixteen years, in which my

tranquillity was never invaded, but by the remembrance of your mother, whose death I have in secret mourned without ceasing, and the reflection of you, whose fate I could never learn, notwithstanding all my inquiries, by means of my friends in France, who, after the most strict examination, could give me no other account, than that you went abroad six years ago, and was never after heard of. I could not rest satisfied with this imperfect information, and though my hope of finding you was but languid, resolved to go in quest of you in person; for which purpose, I have remitted to Holland the value of twenty thousand pounds, and am in possession of fifteen thousand more, with which I intended to embark myself on board of Captain Bowling, before I discovered this amazing stroke of Providence, which you may be sure has not altered my intention."

My father having entertained us with this agreeable sketch of his life, withdrew, in order to relieve Don Antonio, who, in his absence, had done the honours of his house; and I was just dressed for my appearance among the guests, when Strap arrived from the ship.

He no sooner entered the grand apartment in which I was, and saw the magnificence of my apparel, than his speech was lost in amazement, and he gaped in silence at the objects that surrounded him. I took him by the hand, observed that I had sent for him to be a witness and sharer of my happiness, and told him I had found a father. At these words he started, and after having continued some minutes with his mouth and eyes wide open,

cried, "Aha! — odd, I know what! go thy ways, poor Narcissa, and go thy ways, somebody else — well — Lord, what a thing is love! — God help us! are all our mad pranks and protestations come to this? and have you fixed your habitation in this distant land? God prosper you! — I find we must part at last — for I would not leave my poor carcass so far from my native home for all the wealth in the universe!" With these ejaculations, he began to sob and make wry faces; upon which I assured him of his mistake, both in regard to Narcissa, and my staying at Paraguay, and informed him, as briefly as I could, of the great event which had happened. Never was rapture more ludicrously expressed, than in the behaviour of this worthy creature, who cried, laughed, whistled, sung, and danced all in a breath. His transport was scarce over, when my father entered, who no sooner understood that this was Strap, than he took him by the hand, saying, "Is this the honest man, who befriended you so much in your distress? you are welcome to my house, and I will soon put it in the power of my son to reward you for your good offices in his behalf; in the meantime, go with us, and partake of the repast that is provided." Strap, wild as he was with joy, would by no means accept of the proffered honour, crying, "God forbid! — I know my distance — your worship shall excuse me." And Don Rodrigo finding his modesty invincible, recommended him to his majordomo, to be treated with the utmost respect; while he carried me into a large saloon, where I was presented to a numerous company, who loaded me

with compliments and caresses, and congratulated my father in terms not proper for me to repeat.

Without specifying the particulars of our entertainment, let it suffice to say, it was at the same time elegant and sumptuous, and the rejoicings lasted two days. After which, Don Rodrigo settled his affairs, converted his effects into silver and gold, visited and took leave of all his friends, who were grieved at his departure, and honoured me with considerable presents; and, coming on board of my uncle's ship, with the first favourable wind we sailed from the Rio de la Plata, and in two months came safe to an anchor in the harbour of Kingston, in the Island of Jamaica.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

I VISIT MY OLD FRIEND THOMSON — WE SET SAIL FOR EUROPE — MEET WITH AN ODD ADVENTURE — ARRIVE IN ENGLAND — I RIDE ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM PORTSMOUTH TO SUSSEX — CONVERSE WITH MRS. SAGELY, WHO INFORMS ME OF NARCISSA'S BEING IN LONDON — IN CONSEQUENCE OF THIS INTELLIGENCE, I PROCEED TO CANTERBURY — MEET WITH MY OLD FRIEND MORGAN — ARRIVE AT LONDON — VISIT NARCISSA — INTRODUCE MY FATHER TO HER — HE IS CHARMED WITH HER GOOD SENSE AND BEAUTY — WE COME TO A DETERMINATION OF DEMANDING HER BROTHER'S CONSENT TO OUR MARRIAGE.

I INQUIRED, as soon as I got ashore, about my generous companion, Mr. Thomson; and hearing that he lived in a flourishing condition upon the estate left him by his wife's father, who had been dead some years, I took horse immediately, with the consent of Don Rodrigo, who had heard me mention him with great regard, and in a few hours reached the place of his habitation.

I should much wrong the delicacy of Mr. Thomson's sentiments, to say barely he was glad to see me. He felt all that the most sensible and disinterested friendship could feel on this occasion; introduced me to his wife, a very amiable young lady, who

had already blessed him with two fine children; and being as yet ignorant of my circumstances, frankly offered me the assistance of his purse and interest. I thanked him for his generous intention, and made him acquainted with my situation, on which he congratulated me with great joy, and after I had staid with him a whole day and night, accompanied me back to Kingston, to wait upon my father, whom he invited to his house. Don Rodrigo complied with his request, and, having been handsomely entertained during the space of a week, returned extremely well satisfied with the behaviour of my friend and his lady, to whom, at parting, he presented a very valuable diamond ring, as a token of his esteem. During the course of my conversation with Mr. Thomson, he gave me to understand, that his and my old commander, Captain Oakum, was dead some months; and that, immediately after his death, a discovery had been made of some valuable effects that he had feloniously secreted out of a prize, by the assistance of Doctor Mackshane, who was now actually in prison on that account, and, being destitute of friends, subsisted solely on the charity of my friend, whose bounty he had implored in the most abject manner, after having been the barbarous occasion of driving him to that terrible extremity on board of the *Thunder*, which we have formerly related. Whatsoever this wretch might have been guilty of, I applauded Mr. Thomson's generosity towards him in his distress, which wrought so much upon me also, that I sent him ten pistoles, in such a private manner, that he could never know his benefactor.

While my father and I were caressed among the gentlemen on shore, Captain Bowling had written to his owners, by the packet, which sailed a few days after our arrival, signifying his prosperous voyage hitherto, and desiring them to insure his ship and cargo homeward-bound; after which precaution, he applied himself so heartily to the task of loading his ship, that, with the assistance of Mr. Thomson, she was full in less than six weeks. This kind gentleman likewise procured for Don Rodrigo bills upon London for the greatest part of his gold and silver, by which means it was secured against the risk of the seas and the enemy; and, before we sailed, supplied us with such large quantities of all kinds of stock, that not only we, but the ship's company, fared sumptuously during the voyage.

Everything being ready, we took our leave of our kind entertainers, and, going on board at Port Royal, set sail for England on the first day of June. We beat up to windward, with fine easy weather; and one night, believing ourselves near Cape Tiberoon, lay to, with an intention to wood and water next morning in the bay. While we remained in this situation, a sailor, having drank more new rum than he could carry, staggered overboard, and, notwithstanding all the means that could be used to preserve him, went to the bottom and disappeared. About two hours after this melancholy accident happened, as I enjoyed the cool air on the quarter-deck, I heard a voice rising, as it were, out of the sea, and calling, "Ho, the ship, ahoy!" Upon which one of the men upon the forecastle, cried, "I'll be d—ned, if

that an't Jack Marlinspike, who went overboard!" Not a little surprised at this event, I jumped into the boat that lay alongside, with the second mate and four men, and, rowing towards the place from whence the voice (which repeated the hail) seemed to proceed, we perceived something floating upon the water; when we had rowed a little farther, we discerned it to be a man riding upon a hencoop, who, seeing us approach, pronounced with a hoarse voice, "D—n your bloods! why did you not answer when I hailed?" Our mate, who was a veritable seaman, hearing this salute, said, "By G—, my lads, this is none of our man. This is the devil — pull away for the ship." The fellows obeyed his command, without question, and were already some fathoms on our return, when I insisted on their taking up the poor creature, and prevailed upon them to go back to the wreck; which when we came near the second time, and signified our intention, we received an answer of, "Avast, avast, — what ship, brother?" Being satisfied in this particular, he cried, "D—n the ship, I was in hopes it had been my own — where are you bound?" We satisfied his curiosity in this particular too; upon which he suffered himself to be taken on board, and, after having been comforted with a dram, told us, he belonged to the *Vesuvio* man-of-war, upon a cruise off the Island of Hispaniola; he had fallen overboard about four-and-twenty hours ago, and the ship being under sail, they did not choose to bring to, but tossed a hencoop overboard for his convenience, upon which he was in good hopes of reaching the Cape next morning; howsomever, he

was as well content to be a-board of us, because he did not doubt that we should meet his ship; and, if he had gone ashore in the bay, he might have been taken prisoner by the French. My uncle and father were very much diverted with the account of this fellow's unconcerned behaviour; and, in two days, meeting with the *Vesuvio*, as he expected, sent him on board of her, according to his desire.

Having beat up successfully the Windward Passage, we stretched to the northward, and falling in with a westerly wind, in eight weeks arrived in soundings, and in two days after made the Lizard. It is impossible to express the joy I felt at the sight of English ground! Don Rodrigo was not unmoved, and Strap shed tears of gladness. The sailors profited by our satisfaction; the shoe that was nailed to the mast being quite filled with our liberality. My uncle resolved to run up into the Downs at once; but the wind shifting when we were abreast of the Isle of Wight, he was obliged to turn into St. Helen's, and come to Spithead, to the great mortification of the crew, thirty of whom were immediately pressed on board of a man-of-war.

My father and I went ashore immediately at Portsmouth, leaving Strap with the captain to go round with the ship and take care of our effects; and I discovered so much impatience to see my charming Narcissa, that my father permitted me to ride across the country to her brother's house; while he should hire a post-chaise for London, where he would wait for me at a place to which I directed him.

Fired with all the eagerness of passion, I took post

that very night, and in the morning reached an inn, about three miles from the squire's habitation; here I remained till next morning, allaying the torture of my impatience with the rapturous hope of seeing that divine creature, after an absence of eighteen months, which, far from impairing, had raised my love to the most exalted pitch! Neither were my reflections free from apprehensions, that sometimes intervened in spite of all my hope, and represented her as having yielded to the importunity of her brother, and blessed the arms of an happy rival. My thoughts were even maddened with the fear of her death; and when I arrived in the dark at the house of Mrs. Sagely, I had not for some time courage to desire admittance, lest my soul should be shocked with dismal tidings. At length, however, I knocked, and no sooner certified the good gentlewoman of my voice, than she opened the door and received me with a most affectionate embrace, that brought tears into her aged eyes. "For Heaven's sake! dear mother," cried I, "tell me, how is Narcissa? is she the same that I left her?" She blessed my ears with saying, "She is as beautiful, in as good health, and as much yours as ever."

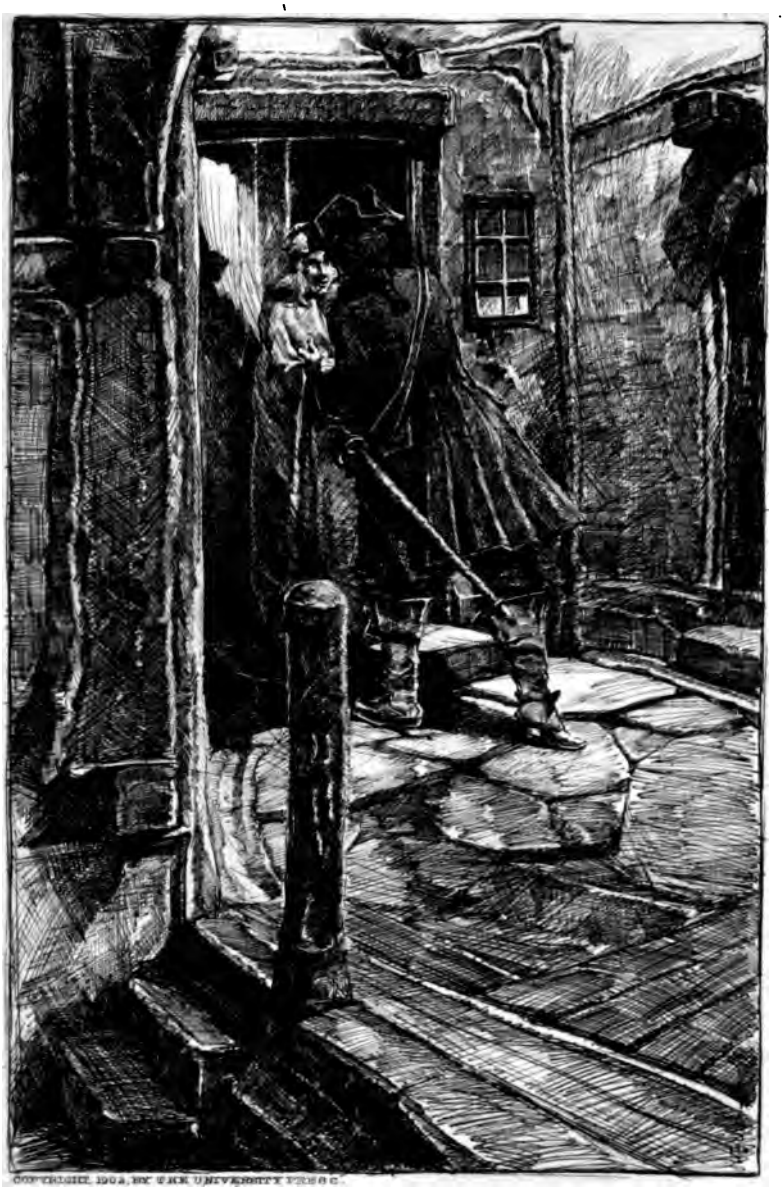
Transported at this assurance, I begged to know if I could not see her that very night; when this sage matron gave me to understand that my mistress was in London, and that things were strangely altered in the squire's house since my departure; that he had been married a whole year to Melinda, who at first found means to wean his attention so much from Narcissa, that he became quite careless of that lovely sis-

ter, comforting himself with the clause in his father's will, by which she should forfeit her fortune by marrying without his consent; that my mistress, being but indifferently treated by her sister-in-law, had made use of her freedom some months ago, and gone to town, where she was lodged with Miss Williams, in expectation of my arrival; and had been pestered with the addresses of Lord Quiverwit, who, finding her heart engaged, had fallen upon a great many shifts to persuade her that I was dead; but, finding all his artifices unsuccessful, and despairing of gaining her affection, he had consoled himself for her indifference, by marrying another lady some weeks ago, who had already left him on account of some family uneasiness. Besides this interesting information, she told me, that there was not a great deal of harmony between Melinda and the squire, who was so much disgusted at the number of gallants who continued to hover about her even after marriage, that he had hurried her down into the country, much against her own inclination, where their mutual animosities had risen to such a height, that they preserved no decency before company or servants, but abused one another in the grossest terms.

This good old gentlewoman, to give me a convincing proof of my dear Narcissa's unalterable love, gratified me with a sight of the last letter she had favoured her with, in which I was mentioned with so much honour, tenderness, and concern, that my soul was fired with impatience, and I determined to ride all night, that I might have it the sooner in my power to make her happy. Mrs. Sagely perceiving

[illegible] comforting himself with the clause in his father's will, by which she should forfeit her fortune by marrying without his consent; that my mistress, being but indifferently treated by her sister-in-law, had made use of her freedom some months ago, and [illegible] to town, where she was lodged with Miss Wil[illegible], in expectation of my arrival; and had been [illegible] with the addresses of Lord Quiverwit, who, finding her heart engaged, had fallen upon a great [illegible] to persuade her that I was dead; but, finding all his artifices unsuccessful, and despairing of gaining her affection, he had consoled himself for her indifference, by marrying another lady some weeks ago, who had already left him on account of some [illegible] this interesting informa[illegible] was not a great deal of [illegible] and the squire, who was [illegible] number of gallants who con[illegible] even after marriage, that [illegible] into the country, much [illegible] where their mutual ani[illegible] height, that they pre[illegible] company or servants, but [illegible] grossest terms.

[illegible] give me a convinc[illegible] unalterable love. [illegible] letter she had [illegible] mentioned with so [illegible] that my soul [illegible] determined to ride [illegible] sooner in my [illegible] Sagely perceiving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my eagerness, and her maternal affection being equally divided between Narcissa and me, begged leave to remind me of the sentiments with which I went abroad, that would not permit me for any selfish gratification to prejudice the fortune of that amiable young lady, who must entirely depend upon me, after having bestowed herself in marriage. I thanked her for her kind concern, and as briefly as possible described my flourishing situation, which afforded this humane person infinite wonder and satisfaction. I told her, that now I had an opportunity to manifest my gratitude for the obligations I owed, I would endeavour to make her old age comfortable and easy; as a step to which, I proposed she should come and live with Narcissa and me. This venerable gentlewoman was so much affected with my words, that the tears ran down her ancient cheeks; she thanked Heaven that I had not belied the presages she had made, on her first acquaintance with me; acknowledging my generosity, as she called it, in the most elegant and pathetic expressions; but declined my proposal, on account of her attachment to the dear melancholy cottage where she had so peacefully consumed her solitary widowhood. Finding her immovable on this subject, I insisted on her accepting a present of thirty guineas, and took my leave, resolving to accommodate her with the same sum annually, for the more comfortable support of the infirmities of old age.

Having rode all night, I found myself at Canterbury in the morning, where I alighted to procure fresh horses; and, as I walked into the inn, perceived

an apothecary's shop on the other side of the street, with the name of Morgan over the door. Alarmed at this discovery, I could not help thinking that my old messmate had settled in this place; and, upon inquiry, found my conjecture true, and that he was married lately to a widow in that city, by whom he had got three thousand pounds. Rejoiced at this intelligence, I went to his shop as soon as it was open, and found my friend behind the counter, busy in preparing a glyster. I saluted him at entrance, with "Your servant, Mr. Morgan." Upon which he looked at me, and replying, "Your most humble servant, goot sir!" rubbed his ingredients in the mortar, without any emotion. "What!" said I, "Morgan, have you forgot your old messmate?" At these words, he looked up again, and starting, cried, "As Got is my — sure it cannot — yes, by my salfation, I pelieve it is my dear friend Mr. Rantom." He was no sooner convinced of my identity, than he threw down the pestle, overset the mortar, and jumping over the board, swept up the contents with his clothes, flew about my neck, hugged me affectionately, and daubed me all over with turpentine and the yolks of eggs, which he had been mixing when I came in. Our mutual congratulations being over, he told me, that he found himself a widower upon his return from the West Indies; that he had got interest to be appointed surgeon of a man-of-war, in which capacity he had served some years, until he married an apothecary's widow, with whom he now enjoyed a pretty good sum of money, peace and quiet, and an indifferent good trade. He was very desirous of hearing my

adventures, which I assured him I had not time to relate, but told him in general, my circumstances were very good, and that I hoped to see him when I should not be in such a hurry as at present. He insisted, however, on my staying breakfast, and introduced me to his wife, who seemed to be a decent sensible woman, pretty well stricken in years. In the course of our conversation, he showed the sleeve buttons I had exchanged with him at our parting in the West Indies, and was not a little proud to see that I had preserved his with the same care. When I informed him of Mackshane's condition, he seemed at first to exult over his distress; but, after a little recollection, said, "Well, he has paid for his malice, I forgife him, and may Got forgife him likewise." He expressed great concern for the soul of Captain Oakum, which he believed was now gnashing its teeth; but it was some time before I could convince him of Thomson's being alive, at whose good fortune, nevertheless, he was extremely glad.

Having renewed our protestations of friendship, I bade the honest Welshman and his spouse farewell, and taking post-horses, arrived at London that same night, where I found my father in good health, to whom I imparted what I had learned of Narcissa. This indulgent parent approved of my intention of marrying her, even without a fortune, provided her brother's consent could not be obtained; promised to make over to me in a few days a sufficiency to maintain her in a fashionable manner, and expressed a desire of seeing this amiable creature, who had captivated me so much. As I had not slept the

night before, and was besides fatigued with my journey, I found myself under a necessity of taking some repose, and went to bed accordingly; next morning about ten o'clock, took a chair, and, according to Mrs. Sagely's directions, went to my charmer's lodgings, and inquired for Miss Williams. I had not waited in the parlour longer than a minute, when this young woman entered, and no sooner perceived me, than she shrieked and ran backward; but I got between her and the door, and clasping her in my arms, brought her to herself with an embrace. "Good Heaven," cried she, "Mr. Random, is it you indeed? my mistress will run distracted with joy." I told her, it was from an apprehension that my sudden appearance might have some bad effect on my dear Narcissa, that I had desired to see her first, in order to concert some method of acquainting her mistress gradually with my arrival. She approved of my conduct, and, after having yielded to the suggestions of her own friendship, in asking if my voyage had been successful, charged herself with that office, and left me glowing with desire of seeing and embracing the object of my love.

In a very little time I heard somebody come downstairs in haste, and the voice of my angel pronounce, with an eager tone, "O Heaven! is it possible! where is he?" How were my faculties aroused at this well-known sound! and how was my soul transported, when she broke in upon my view, in all the bloom of ripened beauty! *Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye, in every gesture dignity and love!* — You whose souls are susceptible of the most delicate im-

pressions, whose tender bosoms have felt the affecting vicissitudes of love, who have suffered an absence of eighteen long months from the dear object of your hope, and found at your return the melting fair, as kind and as constant as your heart could wish, do me justice on this occasion, and conceive what unutterable rapture possessed us both, while we flew into each other's arms! This was no time for speech, — locked in a mutual embrace, we continued some minutes in a silent trance of joy! — When I thus encircled all that my soul held dear, while I hung over her beauties, — beheld her eyes sparkle, and every feature flush with virtuous fondness; when I saw her enchanting bosom heave with undissembled rapture, and knew myself the happy cause — Heavens! what was my situation! I am tempted to commit my paper to the flames, and to renounce my pen for ever, because its most ardent and lucky expression so poorly describes the emotions of my soul. "O adorable Narcissa!" cried I; "O miracle of beauty, love, and truth! I at last fold thee in my arms! I at last can call thee mine! No jealous brother shall thwart our happiness again; fortune hath at length recompensed me for all my sufferings, and enabled me to do justice to my love." The dear creature smiled ineffably charming, and, with a look of bewitching tenderness, said, "And shall we never part again?" "Never," I replied, "thou wondrous pattern of all earthly perfection! never, until death shall divide us! By this ambrosial kiss, a thousand times more fragrant than the breeze that sweeps the orange grove, I never more will leave thee!"

As my first transport abated, my passion grew turbulent and unruly. I was giddy with standing on the brink of bliss, and all my virtue and philosophy were scarce sufficient to restrain the inordinate sallies of desire. Narcissa perceived the conflict within me, and, with her usual dignity of prudence, called off my imagination from the object in view, and, with eager expressions of interested curiosity, desired to know the particulars of my voyage. In this I gratified her inclination, bringing my story down to the present hour. She was infinitely surprised at the circumstance of my finding my father, which brought tears into her lovely eyes. She was transported at hearing that he approved my flame, discovered a longing desire of being introduced to him, congratulated herself and me upon my good fortune, and observed that this great and unexpected stroke of fate seemed to have been brought about by the immediate direction of Providence. Having entertained ourselves some hours with the genuine effusions of our souls, I obtained her consent to complete my happiness as soon as my father should judge it proper, and, applying with my own hands a valuable necklace, composed of diamonds and amethysts set alternately, which an old Spanish lady at Paraguay had presented me with, I took my leave, promising to return in the afternoon with Don Rodrigo.

When I went home, this generous parent inquired very affectionately about the health of my dear Narcissa, to whom that I might be the more agreeable, he put into my hand a deed, by which I found myself in possession of fifteen thousand pounds, exclusive of

the profits of my own merchandise, which amounted to three thousand more. After dinner I accompanied him to the lodging of my mistress, who, being dressed for the occasion, made a most dazzling appearance. I could perceive him struck with her figure, which I really think was the most beautiful that ever was created under the sun. He embraced her tenderly, and told her he was proud of having a son who had a spirit to attempt, and qualifications to engage the affections of such a fine lady. She blushed at this compliment, and with eyes full of the softest languishment turned upon me, said, she should have been unworthy of Mr. Random's attention, had she been blind to his extraordinary merit. I made no other answer than a low bow. My father, sighing, pronounced, "Such once was my Charlotte!" while the tear rushed into his eye, and the tender heart of Narcissa manifested itself in two precious drops of sympathy, which, but for his presence, I would have kissed away. Without repeating the particulars of our conversation, I shall only observe, that Don Rodrigo was as much charmed with her good sense as with her appearance; and she was no less pleased with his understanding and polite address. It was determined that he should write to the squire, signifying his approbation of my passion for his sister, and offering a settlement which he should have no reason to reject; and that, if he should refuse the proposal, we would crown our mutual wishes without any farther regard to his will.

CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

MY FATHER MAKES A PRESENT TO NARCISSA — THE LETTER IS DESPATCHED TO HER BROTHER — I APPEAR AMONG MY ACQUAINTANCE — BANTER'S BEHAVIOUR — THE SQUIRE REFUSES HIS CONSENT — MY UNCLE COMES TO TOWN — APPROVES OF MY CHOICE — I AM MARRIED — WE MEET THE SQUIRE AND HIS LADY AT THE PLAY — OUR ACQUAINTANCE IS COURTED.

AFTER having spent the evening to the satisfaction of all present, my father addressed himself thus to Narcissa, "Madam, give me leave to consider you hereafter as my daughter, in which capacity I insist upon your accepting this first instance of my paternal duty and affection." With these words he put into her hand a bank note of £500, which she no sooner examined, than, with a low curtsey, she replied, "Dear sir, though I have not the least occasion for this supply, I have too great a veneration for you to refuse this proof of your generosity and esteem, which I the more freely receive, because I already look upon Mr. Random's interest as inseparably connected with mine." He was extremely well pleased with her frank and ingenuous reply; upon which we saluted, and wished her good night. The letter, at my request, was despatched to Sussex by an express, and, in the meantime, Don Rodrigo, to

grace my nuptials, hired a ready furnished house, and set up a very handsome equipage.

Though I passed the greatest part of the day with the darling of my soul, I found leisure sometimes to be among my former acquaintance, who were astonished at the magnificence of my appearance. Banter, in particular, was confounded at the strange vicissitudes of my fortune, the causes of which he endeavoured in vain to discover, until I thought fit to disclose the whole secret of my last voyage, partly in consideration of our former intimacy, and partly to prevent unfavourable conjectures, which he and others, in all probability, would have made in regard to my circumstances. He professed great satisfaction at this piece of news, and I had no cause to believe him insincere, when I considered that he would now look upon himself as acquitted of the debt he owed me, and at the same time flatter himself with hopes of borrowing more. I carried him home to dinner with me, and my father liked his conversation so much, that, upon hearing his difficulties, he desired me to accommodate him for the present, and inquire if he would accept of a commission in the army, towards the purchase of which he would willingly lend him money.

Accordingly, I gave my friend an opportunity of being alone with me, when, as I expected, he told me that he was just on the point of being reconciled to an old rich uncle, whose heir he was, but wanted a few pieces for immediate expense, which he desired I would lend him, and take his bond for the whole. His demand was limited to ten guineas; and when

I put twenty into his hand, he stared at me for some moments; then putting it into his purse, said, "Ay, 't is all one, — you shall have the whole in a very short time." When I had taken his note, to save the expense of a bond, I expressed some surprise that a fellow of his spirit should loiter away his time in idleness, and asked why he did not choose to make his fortune in the army? "What!" said he, "throw away my money upon a subaltern's commission, to be under the command of a parcel of scoundrels, who have raised themselves above me by the most infamous practices! No, I love independency too well to sacrifice my life, health, and pleasure, for such a pitiful consideration." Finding him averse to this way of life, I changed the subject, and returned to Don Rodrigo, who had just received the following epistle from the squire: —

"Sir, — Concerning a letter which I received, subscribed R. Random, this is the answer. As for you, I know nothing of you. Your son, or pretended son, I have seen; — if he marries my sister, at his peril be it; I do declare, that he shall not have one farthing of her fortune, which becomes my property, if she takes a husband without my consent. Your settlement, I do believe, is all a sham, and yourself no better than you should be; but if you had all the wealth of the Indies, your son shall never match in our family, with the consent of

"Orson Topehall."

My father was not much surprised at this polite letter, after having heard the character of the author; and, as for me, I was even pleased at his refusal,

because I now had an opportunity of showing my disinterested love. By his permission I waited on my charmer; and, having imparted the contents of her brother's letter, at which she wept bitterly, in spite of all my consolation and caresses, the time of our marriage was fixed at the distance of two days. During this interval, in which my soul was wound up to the last stretch of rapturous expectation, Narcissa endeavoured to reconcile some of her relations in town to her marriage with me; but, finding them all deaf to her remonstrances, either out of envy or prejudice, she told me with the most enchanting sweetness, while the tears bedewed her lovely cheeks, "Sure the world will no longer question your generosity, when you take a poor forlorn beggar to your arms." Affected with her sorrow, I pressed the fair mourner to my breast, and swore that she was more dear and welcome on that account, because she had sacrificed her friends and fortune to her love for me. My uncle, for whose character she had a great veneration, being by this time come to town, I introduced him to my bride; and, although he was not very much subject to refined sensations, he was struck dumb with admiration at her beauty. After having kissed and gazed at her for some time, he turned to me, saying, "Odds bobs, Rory! here's a notable prize, indeed, finely built and gloriously rigged, i' faith! if she an't well manned when you have the command of her, sirrah, you deserve to go to sea in a cockle-shell. No offence, I hope, niece; you must not mind what I say, being, as the saying is, a plain seafaring man; thof, mayhap, I have as much regard

for you as another." She received him with great civility, told him she had longed a great while to see a person to whom she was so much indebted for his generosity to Mr. Random; that she looked upon him as her uncle, by which name she begged leave to call him for the future; and that she was very sure he could say nothing that would give her the least offence. The honest captain was transported at her courteous behaviour, and insisted upon giving her away at the ceremony, swearing that he loved her as well as if she was his own child, and that he would give two thousand guineas to the first fruit of our love, as soon as it could squeak.

Everything being prepared for the solemnisation of our nuptials, which were to be performed privately at my father's house, the auspicious hour arrived, when Don Rodrigo and my uncle went in the coach to fetch the bride and Miss Williams; leaving me with a parson, Banter, and Strap, neither of whom had as yet seen my charming mistress. My faithful valet, who was on the rack of impatience to behold a lady of whom he had heard so much, no sooner understood that the coach was returned, than he placed himself at a window to have a peep at her as she alighted; and when he saw her, clapped his hands together, turned up the white of his eyes, and, with his mouth wide open, remained in a sort of ecstasy, which broke out into "*O Dea certe! qualis in Eurotæ ripis, aut per juga Cynthi, exercet Diana choros!*" The doctor and Banter were surprised to hear my man speak Latin; but when my father led Narcissa into the room, the object of their admira-

tion was soon changed, as appeared in the countenances of both. Indeed, they must have been the most insensible of all beings, could they have beheld, without emotion, the divine creature that approached! She was dressed in a sack of white satin, embroidered on the breast with gold; the crown of her head was covered with a small French cap, from whence descended her beautiful hair in ringlets that waved upon her snowy neck, which dignified the necklace I had given her; her looks glowed with modesty and love; and her bosom, through the veil of gauze that shaded it, afforded a prospect of Elysium!

I received this inestimable gift of Providence as became me; and in a little time the clergyman did his office, my uncle, at his own earnest request, acting the part of a father to my dear Narcissa, who trembled very much, and had scarce spirits sufficient to support her under this great change of situation. Soon as she was mine by the laws of heaven and earth, I printed a burning kiss upon her lips, my father embraced her tenderly, my uncle hugged her with great affection, and I presented her to my friend Banter, who saluted her in a very polite manner; Miss Williams hung round her neck, and wept plentifully; while Strap fell upon his knees, and begged to kiss his lady's hand, which she presented with great affability. I shall not pretend to describe my own feelings at this juncture; let it suffice to say, that, after having supped and entertained ourselves till ten o'clock, I cautioned my Narcissa against exposing her health by sitting up too late, and she was prevailed upon to withdraw with her maid to an

apartment destined for us. When she left the room, her face was overspread with a blush that set all my blood in a state of fermentation, and made every pulse beat with tenfold vigour! She was so cruel as to let me remain in this condition a full half hour; when, no longer able to restrain my impatience, I broke from the company, burst into her chamber, pushed out her confidant, locked the door, and found her — O heaven and earth! — a feast, a thousand times more delicious than my most sanguine hope presaged! — But let me not profane the chaste mysteries of Hymen. I was the happiest of men!

In the morning I was waked by three or four drums, which Banter had placed under the window; upon which I withdrew the curtain, and enjoyed the unspeakable satisfaction of contemplating those angelic charms, which were now in my possession! *Beauty which, whether sleeping or awake, shot forth peculiar graces!* The light darting upon my Narcissa's eyes, she awoke also, and, recollecting her situation, hid her blushes in my bosom. I was distracted with joy! I could not believe the evidence of my senses, and looked upon all that had happened as the fictions of a dream! In the meantime my uncle knocked at the door, and bade me turn out, for I had had a long spell. I rose accordingly, and sent Miss Williams to her mistress, myself receiving the congratulations of Captain Bowling, who rallied me in his sea phrase with great success. In less than an hour Don Rodrigo led my wife in to breakfast, where she received the compliments of the company on her looks, which, they said, if possible,

were improved by matrimony. As her delicate ears were offended with none of those indecent ambiguities which are too often spoke on such occasions, she behaved with dignity, unaffected modesty, and ease; and, as a testimony of my affection and esteem, I presented her, in presence of them all, with a deed, by which I settled the whole fortune I was possessed of on her and her heirs for ever. She accepted it with a glance of most tender acknowledgment, observed, that she could not be surprised at anything of this kind I should do, and desired my father to take the trouble of keeping it, saying, "Next to my own Mr. Random, you are the person in whom I ought to have the greatest confidence." Charmed with her prudent and ingenuous manner of proceeding, he took the paper, and assured her that it should not lose its value while in his custody.

As we had not many visits to give and receive, the little time we staid in town was spent in going to public diversions, where I have the vanity to think Narcissa was seldom eclipsed. One night in particular, we had sent our footman to keep one of the stage boxes, which we no sooner entered, than we perceived in the opposite box the squire and his lady, who seemed not a little surprised at seeing us. I was pleased at this opportunity of confronting them; the more, because Melinda was robbed of all her admirers by my wife, who happened that night to outshine her sister both in beauty and dress. She was piqued at Narcissa's victory, tossed her head a thousand different ways, flirted her fan, looked at us with disdain, then whispered to her husband, and

broke out into an affected giggle; but all arts proved ineffectual, either to discompose Mrs. Random, or to conceal her own mortification, which at length forced her away long before the play was done. The news of our marriage being spread with many circumstances to our disadvantage, by the industry of this malignant creature, a certain set of persons, fond of scandal, began to inquire into the particulars of my fortune, which they no sooner understood to be independent, than the tables were turned, and our acquaintance courted as much as it had been despised before. But Narcissa had too much dignity of pride to encourage this change of conduct, especially in her relations, whom she could never be prevailed upon to see, after the malicious reports they had raised to her prejudice.

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

MY FATHER INTENDS TO REVISIT THE PLACE OF HIS NATIVITY — WE PROMISE TO ACCOMPANY HIM — MY UNCLE RENEWS HIS WILL IN MY FAVOUR, DETERMINING TO GO TO SEA AGAIN — WE SET OUT FOR SCOTLAND — ARRIVE AT EDINBURGH — PURCHASE OUR PATERNAL ESTATE — PROCEED TO IT — HALT AT THE TOWN WHERE I WAS EDUCATED — TAKE UP MY BOND TO CRAB — THE BEHAVIOUR OF POTION AND HIS WIFE, AND ONE OF MY FEMALE COUSINS — OUR RECEPTION AT THE ESTATE — STRAP MARRIES MISS WILLIAMS, AND IS SETTLED BY MY FATHER TO HIS OWN SATISFACTION — I AM MORE AND MORE HAPPY.

MY father intending to revisit his native country, and pay the tribute of a few tears at my mother's grave, Narcissa and I resolved to accompany him in the execution of his pious office, and accordingly prepared for the journey; in which, however, my uncle would not engage, being resolved to try his fortune once more at sea. In the meantime he renewed his will in favour of my wife and me, and deposited it in the hands of his brother-in-law. While I, that I might not be wanting to my own interest, summoned the squire to produce his father's will at Doctors' Commons, and employed a proctor to manage the affair in my absence.

Everything being thus settled, we took leave of all our friends in London, and set out for Scotland, Don Rodrigo, Narcissa, Miss Williams, and I, in the coach, and Strap with two men in livery on horseback. As we made easy stages, my charmer held it out very well till we arrived at Edinburgh, where we proposed to rest ourselves some weeks.

Here Don Rodrigo having intelligence that the fox-hunter had spent his estate, which was to be exposed to sale by public auction, he determined to make a purchase of the spot where he was born, and actually bought all the land that belonged to his father.

In a few days after this bargain was made, we left Edinburgh, in order to go and take possession; and, by the way, halted one night in that town where I was educated. Upon inquiry, I found that Mr. Crab was dead; whereupon I sent for his executor, paid the sum I owed, with interest, and took up my bond. Mr. Potion and his wife, hearing of our arrival, had the assurance to come to the inn where we lodged, and send up their names, with a desire of being permitted to pay their respects to my father and me; but their sordid behaviour towards me, when I was an orphan, had made too deep an impression on my mind, to be effaced by this mean mercenary piece of condescension. I therefore rejected their message with disdain, and bade Strap tell them, that my father and I desired to have no communication with such low-minded wretches as they were.

They had not been gone half an hour, when a

woman, without any ceremony, opened the door of the room where we sat, and, making towards my father, accosted him with, "Uncle, your servant — I am glad to see you." This was no other than one of my female cousins, mentioned in the first part of my memoirs, to whom Don Rodrigo replied, "Pray, who are you, madam?" "O!" cried she, "my cousin Rory there knows me very well. — Don't you remember me, Rory?" "Yes, madam," said I; "for my own part, I shall never forget you. Sir, this is one of the young ladies, who, as I formerly told you, treated me so humanely in my childhood!" When I pronounced these words, my father's resentment glowed in his visage, and he ordered her to be gone, with such a commanding aspect, that she retired in a fright, muttering curses as she went downstairs. We afterwards learned that she was married to an ensign, who had already spent all her fortune; and that her sister had bor[n]e a child to her mother's footman, who is now her husband, and keeps a petty alehouse in the country.

The fame of our flourishing condition having arrived at this place before us, we got notice that the magistrates intended next day to compliment us with the freedom of their town; upon which my father, considering their complaisance in the right point of view, ordered the horses to the coach early in the morning.

We proceeded to our estate, which lay about twenty miles from this place; and when we came within half a league of the house, were met by

a prodigious number of poor tenants, men, women, and children, who testified their joy by loud acclamations, and accompanied our coach to the gate. As there is no part of the world in which the peasants are more attached to their lords than in Scotland, we were almost devoured by their affection. My father had always been their favourite, and, now that he appeared their master, after having been thought dead so long, their joy broke out into a thousand extravagances. When we entered the court-yard, we were surrounded by a vast number, who crowded together so closely to see us, that several were in danger of being squeezed to death; those who were near Don Rodrigo fell upon their knees, and kissed his hand, or the hem of his garment, praying aloud for long life and prosperity to him; others approached Narcissa and me in the same manner; while the rest clapped their hands at a distance, and invoked Heaven to shower its choicest blessings on our heads! In short, the whole scene, though rude, was so affecting, that the gentle partner of my heart wept over it, and my father himself could not refrain from dropping a tear.

Having welcomed his daughter and me to his house, he ordered some bullocks to be killed, and some hogsheads of ale to be brought from the neighbouring village, to regale these honest people, who had not enjoyed such a holiday for many years before.

Next day we were visited by the gentlemen in the neighbourhood, most of them our relations, one

of whom brought along with him my cousin the fox-hunter, who had stayed at his house since he was obliged to leave his own. My father was generous enough to receive him kindly, and even promise to purchase for him a commission in the army, for which he expressed great thankfulness and joy.

My charming Narcissa was universally admired and loved for her beauty, affability, and good sense; and so well pleased with the situation of the place, and the company round, that she has not as yet discovered the least desire of changing her habitation.

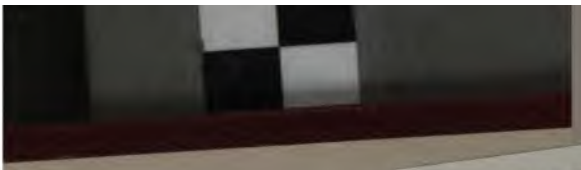
We had not been many days settled, when I prevailed upon my father to pay a visit to the village where I had been at school. Here we were received by the principal inhabitants, who entertained us in the church, where Mr. Syntax the schoolmaster, my tyrant being dead, pronounced a Latin oration in honour of our family. And none exerted themselves more than Strap's father and relations, who looked upon the honest valet as the first gentleman of their race, and honoured his benefactors accordingly. Having received the homage of this place, we retired, leaving forty pounds for the benefit of the poor of the parish, and that very night, Strap being a little elevated with the regard that had been shown to him, and to me on his account, ventured to tell me, that he had a sneaking kindness for Miss Williams, and that, if his lady and I would use our interest in his behalf, he did not doubt that she would listen to

his addresses. Surprised at this proposal, I asked if he knew the story of that unfortunate young gentlewoman. Upon which he replied, "Yes, yes, I know what you mean — she has been unhappy, I grant you — but what of that? I am convinced of her reformation; or else you and my good lady would not treat her with such respect. — As for the censure of the world, I value it not a fig's end — besides, the world knows nothing of the matter." I commended his philosophy, and interested Narcissa in his cause; who interceded so effectually, that, in a little time, Miss Williams yielded her consent, and they were married with the approbation of Don Rodrigo, who gave him five hundred pounds to stock a farm, and made him overseer of his estate. My generous bedfellow gave her maid the same sum; so that they live in great peace and plenty within half a mile of us, and daily put up prayers for our preservation.

If there be such a thing as true happiness on earth I enjoy it. The impetuous transports of my passion are now settled and mellowed into endearing fondness and tranquillity of love, rooted by that intimate connexion and interchange of hearts, which nought but virtuous wedlock can produce. — Fortune seems determined to make ample amends for her former cruelty; for my proctor writes, that, notwithstanding the clause in my father-in-law's will, on which the squire founds his claim, I shall certainly recover my wife's fortune, in consequence of a codicil annexed, which explains that clause, and limits her restriction to the age of nineteen, after

which she was at her own disposal. I would have set out for London immediately after receiving this piece of intelligence, but my dear angel has been qualmish of late, and begins to grow remarkably round in the waist; so that I cannot leave her in such an interesting situation, which I hope will produce something to crown my felicity.

THE END.



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